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Gregory Feeley

The Evidence of Things Not Shown: Family Romance in *The Book of the New Sun*

"Exile is the wound of kingship," says Anthony Powell at the opening of a recent novel. Exile, grievous wounding, and the gaining of kingship are central themes of *The Book of the New Sun*, and are sounded early and with appropriate gravity: *exile* is the final word of the first sentence, *throne* that of its first chapter. Regarding the wound Wolfe is more reticent, although it proves the same as that which afflicted Powell's eponymous Fisher King: the sexual mutilation of the monarch that is directly associated with his inability to replenish his land. That the Autarch of the tetralogy's warring Commonwealth suffers from the same "disability" (to use Jessie L. Weston's term) as the king of the Grail legend is disclosed with elaborate indirection: his sexual inadequacy is hinted at in the first volume, suggested when a figure later identified as the Autarch is called "androgynous" in the second, and explained only in the last, when we are told that his maiming resulted from his failure to bring the New Sun. This procedure seems to contrast strongly with the straightforward account of the artless Severian (who tells us he has forgotten nothing, and moreover will tell no lie), and the ingenuous reader, bemused by a text which even at its most superficial reading seems to know more than it tells, may conclude that Severian is allowing himself some measure of narrative artifice, if only that of usually disclosing facts only as he learned them. Such trust will carry the reader so far and no farther, for the assurances of the text's reliability should be taken in light of Severian and Dorcas's discussion—it amounts almost to a formal hint—of how every phenomenon has a practical, manifold, and a "transsubstantial" meaning, which last expresses the will of the creator who "set [it] in motion." Of course the text is "reliable"—we have nothing else to rely upon—but its artifice ("Everything is a sign . . . Some signs may betray the third meanings more readily than others") reminds us forcibly of the artifice's other attributes besides exile: silence and cunning.

Of course there can be no question: the text that purports to be rude Severian's swiftly written memoirs nevertheless falls into four volumes of identical length, each with its own symmetry and closure. Wolfe uses several hundred arcane words to designate mundane objects in Severian's society (Master Gurolos is taxed for mispronouncing "quite common words: *arsenate, sulphine, boraxen*"), which shows a remarkable command of language; but the 200 or so proper names in the text prove to be all historical allusions, each covertly expressing the will of the book's creator, and this shows cunning. The reader who takes the trouble to look up the word "coitus" will gain a sharper picture of the soldiers' long-handled, flamethrowing weapons, but the reader who knows that Thecla is named after the first-century saint who followed the Apostle Paul into prison will appreciate better how the profane eucharist of Severian's ingestion of his beloved also partakes of the sacred.

The silence may be harder to hear. *The Book of the New Sun* is a fiction of unusual amplitude: its pages are crowded with incident and dense with detail, and include moreover nearly a dozen recounted stories whose importance to the main narrative must be vainly assayed. Little seems unstated in this overdetermined palimpsest,

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In this issue

Gregory Feeley offers a user's guide to *The Book of the New Sun* and others

Barry N. Malzberg skirts the mattress of memory
Elizabeth Hand treats herself to Pat Cadigan's
Symmers and Patterns

Leonard Rysdyk on the latest
from Arthur C. Clarke and Poul Anderson

Darrell Schweitzer reads H. P. Lovecraft's will

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Plus all-new bibliographies, reading lists, and the further
dream adventures of Michael Swanwick

Barry N. Malzberg

Repentance, Desire and Natalie Wood

Check it out, here is the afterword to a chapter from *Oracle of the Thousand Hands* which appears in *The New Olympia Reader*, 1970:

Barry Malzberg lives with his wife and daughter in Manhattan and is worried about having recently reached the ominous age of thirty . . . Mr. Malzberg's first hardcover novels, *Oracle of the Thousand Hands* and *Screen* are seriously-intentioned works which, according to the author, were neither fun to write nor fun in retrospect. Major influences on his work in no particular order are Norman Mailer, J. D. Salinger, Saul Bellow, James Agee, Vladimir Nabokov, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Nikolai Gogol.

Not quite. The *major* major influences upon the author's "seriously-intentioned" hardcover novels, as well as eight paperbacks done for the Olympia Press America between 1968 and 1973 were really: Jayne Mansfield, Natalie Wood, Hope Lange, repentance, desire, lust, resentment, ambition and the collected op of the Four Coins, Four Preps, Four Seasons and the Belmonts. (Dion, too.) Heady stuff for the kid, though, writing for Nabokov's publisher, citing Gogol and Dostoevsky as influences; I recommend this experience to everyone having real or even slight pretensions to artistry.

Girodias *filis* left Paris in a flurry of debt, lawsuit and governmental revulsion in 1967, decamped to New York, found financial backing (but not too much) from obscure sources, set up active shop here as the reincarnation of that insouciant and eclectic Left Bank spirit which in the 1950s had given bewildered culture lovers the works of Akhbar del Palumbo, Henry Miller, Terry Southern and even Vladimir Nabokov whose *Lolita* had come to Paris in 1955 at the behest of an author whose agent had been unable to place the novel anywhere.

Maurice Girodias, 49 when he came to New York, 36 then, had been unable to sell many copies of *Lolita*, he hadn't done too well with Miller either (Akhbar on the other hand had been a staple) but he had ideas, he would reconstitute the age of enlightenment within the

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borders of a city located on the far Eastern seaboard of a country which was demonstrably going mad.

Clearly, it was going mad, it was his kind of country. First the assassination, then Vietnam, then some other, discreditable assassinations, then the Summer of Love, then Olympia Press America. Then Martin, Robert, Nixon, Apollo, Cambodia, Kent State and Wallace. But by the time of Wallace, Olympia Press was already speeding into Chapter 11 and Girodias, a year after that was, *sans* his new wife, *sans* everything sailing for Paris. "Sunk without trace" is not exactly the phrase for Olympia America, *nothing* is sunk without trace in this country, McGovern is on the lecture circuit and Jefferson Airplane/Starship are heading toward the third incarnation, but it is close. Fairly close. "Sunk almost without trace" probably can be risked.

The New Olympia Reader, 300,000 words of excerpts by about fifty writers, compiled by your faithful undersigned for a free-lancer's pittance (but *not* the author of the authorial biographies or the cited blurb) sold about 500 copies in hardcover, sold no copies in paperback since there was no paperback edition and hasn't been off my shelf in 15 years. Shortly, speedily, it will go back on my shelf.

That anthology was reviewed in a defunct literary journal by a novelist of minor reputation and high recrimination who mentioned none of the selections, spent 4000 words talking (in the abstract) about the prevalence of voyeurism in early 20th century culture as capitalized upon by senior and junior Girodias and sickeningly exhibited here. Not a review but a poisonous meditation.

"Don't worry about it," the publisher said, "don't think about this twice, because of all the American literary crowd, the literateurs in the fifties, sucking around the Rue de Whatever, he was the grubbiest, the silliest, the most desperate and the only one whose work I would not buy, I found him effete and senseless. He's been waiting to get back at me for 18 years and oh that wife of his!" This gave me little comfort, not much *did* give me comfort in those difficult post-prandial years when I came to understand that being Olympia's Best Writer, talisman of a disastrous hardcover program, was in effect to be Girodias's Worst Writer.

"Why am I so self-destructive?" the publisher said to me in a somewhat different context months later when British lawsuits had resulted in his first lot of hardcovers being confiscated at the warehouse and burned at the instigation of a member of the House of Lords whose name had been appropriated for spite as the title of a Traveler's Companion, "why do I do this to myself over and over again?"

"Well, Maurice," I could have said but did not, having even less wit than comprehension in that aftermath of the Summer of Love, "Maybe it's because you turned 50 on April 12, 1969 and men like you, men who have always formed themselves in terms of the debonair, the practical, the outrageous have a lot of trouble at 50 and feel at least that they are going to destruction on their own terms." I could have said that, I could have added that Maurice was exactly 15 years younger than my mother and equally capable of finding guilt in those he implicated, but I did not. One has to get fairly close or closer yet to 50 oneself to be offered such perceptions by which time, usually, it is too late to do much about them.

My mother, speaking of her, was not terribly pleased with her son, so recently the Schubert Foundation Playwriting Fellow but now a bounded and increasingly desperate novelist *manqué* in search of a real market becoming Girodias's Best Writer. The fact that I was also writing science fiction and selling some of it to strange-looking magazines with androids on the cover was—for her at least—no particular compensation. She *was* however somewhat mollified to note in the Christopher Lehmann-Haupt 4/7/69 review of the two novels that they were defined as "a kind of anti-pornography"; this enabled her to seize the day with her friends.

"The problem with your pornography," an editor at Olympia named Uta West said to me in relation to the problem, "The only real trouble is that you write about sex the way that 95% of us experience it 95% of the time but it's hard to get us to pay to read about it, you know?"

Still, like the Common Man in *Martini/Sadie*, I had plans. If my sex scenes were dreamy, my intentions and style were, I trusted, not: I wrote the opening chapters of *Oracle of the Thousand Hands* in a dead fever of February 1968, trying to figure out what might impress

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Nabokov's publisher's first reader and came up with a crazed pastiche of *Pale Fire* and *Despair*, the memoirs of a compulsive masturbator narrated in the alternating first- and third-person with quarts of semen spewed over electric fences, cattle mooing nostalgically in the background at the instant of self-defecation and ultimately a powerful shock from that electrified fence at the moment of final consummation. Giordias or someone there noticed what was going on, he summoned me to Gramercy Park (the Press and four employees worked out of his apartment, skirting the mattress on the floor as they sidled from room to room) and offered me a \$2000 contract.

"Well," he mumbled six weeks later when on an impossible June afternoon I came to hear the verdict on the completed novel mailed oh-so-recently, "it's not your number one best seller but it's amusing and interesting isn't it?" *Amusing and interesting* were his favorite attitudes and everyone in the ideal Traveler's Companion or Ophelia Press book would climax with a smile and a sigh. "I have to accept this, I guess, but now you do something for me. I have a novel I want you to do as a special project for me."

That novel I soon discovered had been offered to and declined as an idea by every writer who had come trooping around or past the mattress: a young man with an empty life and much seminal backup is obsessed with film, watches five films a day, falls vividly in love with actresses, has an imagination so passionate that he can place himself on the screen with and make passionate love to Elizabeth Taylor, Doris Day, Brigitte Bardot, Sophia and the ever-popular "others". "Use their real names," he said, "I want *scandals*, without scandal this cannot work."

"What becomes of the guy?"

"I don't know. Who the hell cares? Maybe he becomes Joe E. Levine, what's the difference. I'll give you a clause protecting you against lawsuits. I *love* lawsuits," he reminded me.

I delivered *Screen* in two weeks, taking Martin Miller, a Department of Welfare investigator in Brooklyn (as I had been) through a

series of Bijoux and into and out of the genitalia of some actresses, also to Aqueduct race track in the borough of Queens and also through more desultory (if unrequested) collusion with a fellow social worker whom he did not love (*roman à clef*, here) but who intimidated his obsession and pointed out that Martin had better get wise, "Because I'm real. I'm also your last chance." (No, she wasn't.) I hold no great brief for the novel but doubt if any better has been written faster, *pace* A. J. Liebling, and it contains for whatever it is worth probably the best sentence I ever wrote and maybe the best sentence published in a novel of lust in 1969; the last sentence of that novel as Martin Miller having walked away from the suddenly desperate colleague, pounds it into a star (and pounds it and pounds it and pounds it, "her body a map, her hands a road to carry me home"):

It is strange and complex, complex and strange and my orgasm is like a giant bird torn wing to wing by rifle fire, falling, falling, in the hot drenched sun of that damned Southwestern city.

That sentence written (as were many of the sentences of that and *Oracle*) with two year old Stephanie Jill burbling and cooing and muttering and bouncing and volubly discussing matters of climate at her father's knee didn't have in draft the word "damned," something seemed to be lacking and in the only revision in either of those two novels, the word was put in for rhythm and emphasis and all of it placed on or near the Giordias mattress shortly after Independence Day.

"You son of a bitch," he pointed out, "you make me crazy, do you know that? I ask you this time for pornography, a simple work of pornography, give you a plot and everything and ask you to keep it simple and low-class, I publish one book for *you* and ask you to do this for *me* and what do you do? You give me 40 pages which are beautiful, just beautiful, you even know the color of that one's *boob* how you tell that! and *then* what do you give me? You give me horse-racing, you give



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me existentialism, you give me despair! You give me terrible anxiety and depression! You give me pain and thwarted desire! This book will sell 400 copies, I have to publish it hardcover too because in paperback everyone will throw it away; I have to publish it because it is a masterpiece, but you *destroy* me, do you understand?"

It sold 350 copies in hardcover, actually, making it the leader of the second "new hardcover line" (*Oracle* sold half that and a novel by Alex Austin, *Eleven*, sold according to statement 52 copies) but none of this was my fault, was it? I mean it was indeed (Lehmann-Haupt backed me up on this) anti-pornography for the coming age of Nixon and under the circumstances, the time could have been right.

But times were never right for the doomed Gioridias. They had been laying for him in the American press for years and years, he said, because he had embarrassed them by putting into print consistently masterpieces that the American publishing establishment had been too cowardly or stupid to undertake: *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* and the *Nexus* trilogy and *Candy* and *Lolita* and virtually everything else that Barney Rosset or Walter Minton had taken on after he had broken ground. (And because the books were published in English outside of the borders of the United States, they were by old copyright law in public domain in this country.) Perhaps he was right; it is not difficult—I can see this as clearly at 27 as I would be unable to admit it at 50—to do justice, to do mercy, to walk humbly and to be *buried* anyway.

Besides, Maurice had said, "Written pornography, it is finished. Finished! Visuals are coming, visuals are where it will be, that and heightened classy books which hairdressers can hand their clientele. Soft-core for the ladies, yes, but nothing for the gentlemen. Our basic audience would rather stare than read which they can hardly manage anyway. The ladies on the other hand will call it romance. It will be finished by 1972, just two years from now."

Like Fitzgerald, like Raymond Chandler, like Thomas Wolfe, my publisher could coolly observe his disaster as if from a distance and by seeming detachment from catatonic feign control. The boat sailed anyway. *The Frog Prince*, the first volume of his proposed series of memoirs, takes him only up to the age of 19 (and is classically uninteresting as would, say, be the biography of the extra-instrumental life of Heifetz or Nixon), was published in France many years ago, perished in a Crown edition here at the start of this decade and bulletins are distant and infrequent. Which is a way of saying "There is no news."

I am, then, or am not near the end of this memoir but would not

want to finish without discussing the issue of courage. He had a crazy, a manifest, a *royal physical courage* which I much admired as did almost anyone who had witnessed its display; he had a true general's detachment, an indifference to consequence founded upon metaphysics. In a dangerous, a perilous Times Square bar at 2 a.m. once where we had repaired, me shuddering he debonair, after a "debate" with an ex-Congressman and a Citizens for Decency League leader on the Farber show, a debate which had left me exhausted and trembling, "I don't have to read your fifth to know what kind of filth it is," O. K. Armstrong, the Congressman, only two months ago reluctantly but administratively passed on at 92 had snapped to me), we were drinking beer for which Gioridias had paid when a truly menacing, a truly dangerous fellow approached, an even less ingenious companion lurking in the background, pointed a menacing finger at Gioridias's sleeve, a knife seeming to glint from a shrouded place and said, "Nice threads, man. Really nice threads."

"Oh," said Maurice, "oh yes, of course, thank you." He began to remove the jacket, rose from the stool, finished the job, extended it. "Would you like?" he said, "it's all yours, my pleasure." The menace went away and Maurice went away and the brave, haunted, doomed Olympia America went away too (in metaphor at least, I am still in that bar, however) and they are to be saluted. Tom wing to wing by rifle fire.

—New Jersey, 1989

Footnote to an unpublished memoir: Maurice did write and publish a sequel to *The Frog Prince*, was interviewed on French radio in consequence of its publication in the summer of 1990, died suddenly after the interview. One would like to think of this as further evidence of the poised irony with which this difficult man attempted to conduct his life; the jaunty bow, the tilt of the eyebrow, exercise in self-publicity and then, *ah!* at the apex and astir his history, that graceful tumble to the pit, the Wallenda of autobiography. But death is too magisterial to command ease, balletic grace from most of us; I cannot imagine (I was not there) how it afflicted Maurice but if anyone could, like Don Giovanni, salute the abyss it was the son of Jack Kahane. And two months later, Leonard Bernstein. Larger and larger pieces of time—

—New Jersey, 31 December 1990

Barry N. Malisberg, author of *Engines of the Night*, lives in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Synners by Pat Cadigan

New York: Bantam Spectra, 1991; \$4.95 pb; 400 pages

Patterns by Pat Cadigan

Kansas City, MO: Ursus Imprints, 1989; \$19.95 trade hb, \$50.00 limited; 209 pages

reviewed by Elizabeth Hand

For several years now Pat Cadigan has been lumped along with the cyberpunk brat pack—Gibson, Sterling, Shirley, et al.—primarily, I would guess, on the basis of her story "Pretty Boy Crossover." But cyberpunk as a literary bannet seems somewhat deserted these days. When I was in Detroit for a symposium on cyberpunk last fall, a twenty-something reader told me it was kind of like watching a bunch of old people in leather jackets playing air guitar to Sonic Youth. Even William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, those avatars of sashimi intrigue, recently opted for a more decorous Victorian setting in their novel *The Difference Engine*, and John Shirley is devoting himself to horror and mainstream fiction.

So where does that leave Pat Cadigan?

To judge from her novel *Synners*, basking in the sun. *Synners* is an exceptional book, with hair-trigger plotting and characters believable enough that you even feel sort of bad when one of the villains gets offed. It has the same breathless thrill of classic novels like Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* or John Varley's *The Ophiuchi Hotline*, the same thrill of watching an author piece together an entire world from a shred of an idea—in Cadigan's case, a technology that allows people to become human synthesizers, projecting their dreams and visions for the entertainment of the masses. I found it the most

exciting display of bravura writing since *Neuromancer*, but without that novel's chilly edge.

Synners is an old-fashioned book in many ways: densely plotted, rich in character and finely detailed settings. The action takes place in a near-future Los Angeles, where even the freeway has been handed over to computers for safekeeping. Cadigan's L. A. crawls with hucksters and has-beens, hacker acrobats and video *artistes* swallowed by an entertainment industry that has devoured entire software and hardware industries as well as Hollywood. The scope of *Synners* is vast. It shows us a whole exquisitely crafted world before it is changed irrevocably by a new technology—the synthesizer "sockets"—and then forces us to watch the dominoes fall one by one as the hardware proves to have sinister and ultimately lethal side effects.

Such a brief *préface* can't do justice to Cadigan's vision of the future, which is both familiar and horrifying, and spellbinding as well. Technological breakthroughs hinted at in Cadigan's other fiction are here given free reign to rage through the streets, in particular the software that allows wannabes to become video. And in the end it's this revolution that eats its own children, though not before we've been shown flashes of artificial intelligence, industrial espionage, and even a little forty-something romance. And it's a great relief to finally find some female

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characters in the genre who aren't wearing codpieces in an effort to seem just like the boys.

Synners has a few weak points. There ought to be a law protecting us from any more brilliant black kid-heroes. Her characters' lingo is so overlaid with the word *fuck* that it grows monotonous and finally ludicrous. Like, give me a fucking break. And while Cadigan's love of vintage punk-era rock and roll is endearing, it's a rather jarring anachronism to think of these future fly-boys and -girls grooving to "Coney Island Baby." Let's just face it, most of our kids are gonna *hate* our music.

But *Synners* is terrific, the most fun this jaded reader has had since reading *The Stars My Destination* and *The Demolished Man* back-to-back on a deserted beach some years ago. It proves Cadigan can shake off those dated genre labels and leave the hardware homeboys behind.

Pasternak is a collection of Pat Cadigan's short fiction, compiled in an elegant edition from Ursus Imprints. Most of the stories lack the depth and variety of *Synners*, not surprising since the collection spans nearly a decade during which the author was, presumably, honing her craft in the sweatshops.

But there's some strong work here, particularly in those tales which rely on realistic characterization and atmosphere rather than the standard genre fare. So the much-vaunted "Pretty Boy Crossover" seems tame and dated now compared to the creepy Combat Zone setting of

"My Brother's Keeper," wherein the protagonist ducks into the junkie underworld in a futile effort to save her brother.

Much of Cadigan's work deals with additions of one sort or another: to drugs, to those sensory-enhancing video hook-ups, even to *genetically* things like alcohol and sex. Her most successful stories show a woman, battle-scarred but still *game*, grappling with these demons in a more or less endearing form. "It Was the Heat" evokes New Orleans' French Quarter, with its mom-and-pop brothels and tourists on a tour; the tale's businesswoman heroine is quite literally seduced by the sultry weather. "Eenie, Meenie, Ipsateenie" evokes childhood fears and adult rancor quite effectively, although it eventually surrenders to being overlong. There are a few aliens, in "Angel" and "Roadside Rescue," but Cadigan's strengths lie with the workaday world that she invokes in other stories, and eventually weaves into the compelling tapestry of *Synners*.

Pat Cadigan's literary apprenticeship—the tales in *Pasternak*, her first novel *Mindplayers*—has paved the way for the striking achievement of *Synners*, a book that proves the old saw about second novels dead wrong. I hope we can look forward to her having and long and prolific career.

Elizabeth Hand, author of Winterlong, lives in Maine, where she is at work on her second novel.

Lovecraft's Legacy edited by Robert Weinberg and Martin H. Greenberg

New York: Tor Books, 1990; \$18.95 hc; 334 pages

reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer

Now that the Lovecraft Centennial has passed, it behooves us to ask why we marked the hundredth anniversary of H. P. Lovecraft's birth, when scant attention was (or will be) paid to many of his more popular contemporaries: Otis Adelbert Kline (born 1891), Seabury Quinn (1889), A. Merritt (1884), or even the greatest pulp superstar of them all, Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875). There's something very special about Lovecraft, and Lovecraft alone.

What precisely was his legacy?

First and foremost, the fiction. Generations yet unborn when the Old Gen wrote have been drawn to the tales of Dunwich and dread Cthulhu, usually making the first contact in the teenage years, for all that, to paraphrase S. T. Joshi, when you've had a good literary education and go back and read Lovecraft as an adult, you discover he was a "real writer." Lovecraft has gathered to himself a vast popular readership completely ignorant of critical literature, lacking historical perspective, unconcerned with any classical canon, uninterested in excuses, and completely enthralled. He may be long dead, but his fiction is very much alive. It can please an audience that doesn't have to be told why it is good.

Lovecraft repays study. He alone of the pulp contributors of his generation has achieved something resembling a world-wide critical reputation. The verdict isn't universally favorable, and Lovecraft has yet to become an academic byword, but there is a growing mountain of critical literature. Meanwhile, nobody writes serious articles about the aesthetics of Seabury Quinn, nor are they likely to.

Through his essays and letters in particular, Lovecraft becomes not merely a thinker, but a kind of presence. He is an image—or perhaps a theme—any writer, particularly a writer of fantastic fiction, will eventually find himself grappling with. Whether or not you share Lovecraft's obsessions is irrelevant. He articulated matters that touch the innermost recesses of any creative soul.

In Lovecraft, the struggle between personal vision and commercialism is brought to the fore. "Fortunately sincere artistic expression is its own incentive and reward," he wrote in "Notes on Interplanetary Fiction," while otherwise taking a dim view of the possibility for genuinely adult science fiction in the pulps of the mid-'30s. ("It is an ironic truth that no artistic story of this kind: honestly, sincerely, and unconventionally written, would be likely to have any chance of acceptance among professional editors of the common pulp school . . . pioneers must be prepared to labor without financial return, professional recognition, or the encouragement of a reading majority . . .") From most writers, this would be simple sour grapes, but coming from the one real master of the period, particularly in light of what was being

published in the pulps of the day, one can't help but feel that Lovecraft was right. Members of his own circle "sold out" and are now remembered only by their association with Lovecraft, if at all. But Lovecraft remained true to himself and triumphed, albeit posthumously. Anyone who takes writing seriously cannot but find that reassuring.

Lovecraft was the writer of Cosmic Vastness. He saw mankind as an insignificant and random biochemical accident in the midst of a mindless universe. In such a universe, mankind would not go very far. But he might dream: ". . . one of my strongest and most persistent wishes being to achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which forever imprison us," he wrote in "Notes on the Writing of Weird Fiction." Of these in particular, "conflict with time" struck him as "the most potent and fruitful theme in all human expression."

Emulating Lovecraft has always been a tricky business. The most energetic of his early admirers, August Derleth, couldn't do it. His pastiches and "posthumous collaborations" read like schoolboy parodies of Lovecraft's work. Derleth may have worshipped Lovecraft the way St. Paul worshipped Jesus, and done nearly as much to spread the Word, but he certainly didn't understand him.

Unfortunately, most post-Lovecraft Lovecraftians have followed Derleth, adding more books to the library of Forbidden Tomes (*Son of Necronomicon*, etc.), copying the most superficial aspects of Lovecraft's singular Gibbon-out-of-Poe style, but completely ignoring the thematic material, or at least failing to express it with any conviction. The endless Cthulhu Mythos stories by other writers are largely games. They make us smile. They take us back to familiar territory. But they are hardly of serious merit, with perhaps half a dozen exceptions, virtually all of them written by T. E. D. Klein.

So one approaches a book like *Lovecraft's Legacy* (a collection of new stories commissioned in honor of H. P. L.'s 100th) with considerable trepidation. The whole post-Lovecraftian pastiche tradition seems too often a kind of mask the writer puts on, *precluding* the sort of uniquely personal vision which made Lovecraft interesting in the first place.

Weinberg and Greenberg have given us a *weird* anthology, not necessarily in the right sense. We first encounter "A Secret Off the Heart" by Mort Castle, an often clumsy, occasionally clever pastiche of Poe. Sure, Lovecraft doted on Poe, but the relevance of this story to this anthology is doubtful. Then there's "Will" by Graham Masterton, which is about an eldritch mystery involving William Shakespeare and the excavation of the site of the Globe Theatre, but contains the

blasphemous suggestion that Yog-Sothoth is so trivial an entity he, it can be done in with a bulldozer. Tentacles may wave and Names be invoked, but this is more of the Derleth/Lair Carter kid-games.

For much of the book we have the impression that the editors are trying to avoid the standard Lovecraftian clichés by avoiding anything that has to do with Lovecraft. We have a routine bit of Haitian voodoo by Hugh B. Cave; Brian Lumley's almost comic invasion of the Earth by extraterrestrial cancer; an unfortunate kept in an attic by a religious lunatic (in Joseph Citro's "Soul Keeper," which comes off as a weak-teen version of either *The Collector* or *Misery*); a completely absurd effusion of ghoulishness by Brian McNaughton which lays on the charnel-house atmosphere so thick the reader is more likely to gag—or giggle—than shudder; and so on.

Only five entries even suggest that the writers have any idea what Lovecraft was about. Two may be classified as jokes, three as real stories.

The jokes first. Chet Williamson's "From the Papers of Helmut Hecker" is about a snobbish author who refuses to be labelled a horror writer, refuses a World Fantasy Award, reviles Lovecraft, insults his readership, and generally sets himself ready for his comeuppance—whereupon he moves to H. P. L.'s old neighborhood in Providence and finds himself possessed by the spirit of the Old Gent himself, who has been reincarnated as a cat. Cute. And Gahan Wilson's "H. P. L." is about a nerdy, Lovecraft-struck fan who pays a visit to the Master in that same old neighborhood in the 1990s, where Lovecraft still dwells as an eccentric millionaire, occult master, and servant of the Old Ones. All this is depicted with great charm and the sort of lovingly twisted detail we expect from Wilson's best cartoons.

The real stories: Gene Wolfe's "Lord of the Land" plays elusive games with Midwestern folklore and with narrative itself, but summons up an age-old, soul-obliterating Shadow Out of Time—without any

overt Lovecraftian references or *Necronomicon*—which would have done Nyarlathotep proud.

Ed Gorman's "The Order of Things Unknown" seems to be another of the completely irrelevant entries: a close-up view of the mind of a Ted Bundy-type serial killer, a figure currently fashionable in horror fiction, but hardly Lovecraftian. But Gorman manages to make the connection, as long as we're willing to believe that the Old Ones are sufficiently concerned with humanity to care who dices whom, which is rather like believing that Zeus is actually nourished by the smoke of a burning ox.

F. Paul Wilson's "The Barrens" makes creative use of New Jersey's Pine Barrens to create a milieu reminiscent of Lovecraft's degenerate rustic communities, incorporating a good deal of genuine Pine Barrens history and folklore. It moves quickly, is a tad weak on character motivations, but *is the only story in the whole book* to touch on the central Lovecraftian theme:

I looked around and knew that everything I saw was a sham, an elaborate illusion. Why . . . to shield us from madness? The truth had brought me no peace. Who could find comfort in the knowledge that huge, immeasurable forces beyond our comprehension were out there, moving about us, beyond the reach of our senses? (p. 331)

There, Wilson has *got it*. "The Barrens" is an authentic, "cosmic" weird tale. It may not be the best ever, but it is the genuine article.

Otherwise, for all his fame and obvious greatness, H. P. Lovecraft's essence remains as elusive as ever. ▴

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The Ghost from the Grand Banks by Arthur C. Clarke

New York: Bantam/Spectra, 1990; \$19.95 hc; 274 pages

reviewed by Leonard Rysdyk

Arthur C. Clarke likes big projects, so for him raising the *Titanic* is a mere parlor trick. But what a delightful one. I might as well admit from the start, I'm an Arthur C. Clarke fan. He was the writer who turned me on to (I suspect I am not alone in this) and (this is probably more unusual) got me interested in literature beyond science fiction. This is because his best work has something transcendent in it. He writes with a touch of the poet and of the lab technician, at his best imbuing technical information with a sense of the spiritual.

The lab technician side glows in *The Ghost from the Grand Banks*. The interest is not generated by the plot alone: it's got a story, of course, and it's got characters; there is even a theme and a philosophical context. But what Clarke really writes about, what really excites him, is the science and technology with which his characters are involved. The science is as important as the fiction—maybe more important. The reader cares not so much whether the ship is raised, but *how* it is raised. Every page of a Clarke novel is filled with *ideas*. And this is where the excitement lies, and what makes *The Ghost from the Grand Banks* great read.

The Ghost from the Grand Banks is an adventure story: a race to raise the sunken ship, a bidding war over which side will hire the hero-engineer, the inevitable natural disaster that throws a monkey wrench into the great engineering project that is the center of the action. But in themselves, these would have no magic. What energizes them is their context, the constant layering of ideas.

On every page, there are references either to well-known, but still new, phenomena (such as fractal graphics or remotely operated underwater vehicles) or some bit of arcane knowledge about science (do you know what octopods are allergic to?) or history (John Jacob Astor wrote a book about a huge ocean liner that sank—he called his the *Titan*; he died on the *Titanic*). Clarke writes a "novel" in the most literal sense of the word: one feels one is always reading something new and that the next chapter will deliver yet another mind-boggler or horizon-expander. Even when the ideas Clarke is presenting aren't really new—a good deal of his facts I felt I had read recently in *Science News* or seen on *News*—there is an excitement in their sheer number. Clarke crams

them in so that one is constantly stimulated. One feels a thrill of discovery.

Of course, this is an odd way of writing a page-turner. The usual formula calls for the author to give each chapter a cliff-hanger ending, but instead the lab technician side of Clarke keeps hauling out some new bauble. For Clarke, it works.

There is a downside to Clarke's writing. Though he is careful to give each character an elaborate personal history, nevertheless his people all seem the same. They are all intelligent, polite, logical, unfappable, and have a touch of ironic wit—even the children. They all sound the same when they speak, though Clarke tells us each has a distinct local accent. When faced with danger, they all put aside their fears for a later time and deal calmly and logically with the problem at hand. They face even their own deaths calmly with, what else, a touch of ironic wit.

Clarke's style sometimes brushes the banal. One character simply must say "Of course . . . [E]veryone knows the domestic icebox has depended on it [the Peltier effect] since 2001 when the environmental treaties banned fluorocarbons" and there are many uncool references to currently popular culture ("... like in an old Steven Spielberg movie") as well as a few quick jabs at his own contributions to it ("computers didn't actually lie").

I might add that in the case of *The Ghost from the Grand Banks*, the ending is a letdown; and the coda—which rushes ahead a few millennia and changes to an alien point of view (something Clarke usually does well)—here seems out of place. That leads to the real trouble with *Ghost*. It lacks the spiritual element that helps make the technological ideas more than just grand, but meaningful.

Nevertheless, in Clarke's hands, the whole exceeds the sum of its parts. The layering of ideas excites the mind. The plot moves along and the project itself—raising the ship—is fascinating. *The Ghost from the Grand Banks* rushes ahead despite its faults. It is not the equal of vintage Clarke, but it is an awfully neat trick. ▴

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The Evidence of Things Not Shown

Continued from page 1

especially after one begins to realize how many of the agents in the book—the hierodules, Valeria's brethren, the Green Man, Father Ash, those conveyed by Father Inire's mirrors or visiting the Botanic Gardens or revived by the Claw—enact dealings whose chronology moves backward in time. Yet absences stand out in the text, sometimes obscured by the richness of detail like pits overgrown by surrounding foliage. Like the dog that did not bark at the night (Wolfe has written, and the full stretch of Wolfe's skill has been expended in distracting the reader—how many noticed first time out that Dorcas's husband, although mentioned several times, is never named?—from what Severian the dissembler (or Wolfe the artificer, since this technique is present in all his mature novels) wishes him not, or not readily, to see.

Asked if he is speaking the truth, the Autarch replies, "I always do. In my position, I have to talk too much to keep a skin offlies in order." The Severian who sits writing in the House Absolute has ingested that Autarch, and presumably adopted his successful policies along with the other wisdom of his forebear. Thus we have sanction to believe that Severian the Lame will write no lies, but Severian the apprentice and later journeyman has told a great many (as he readily admits), which the writing hand rarely scruples to identify. When Valeria mentions having heard that the Citadel contains a "Tower of Torment . . . where all who enter die in agony," the young Severian assures her that it is a fable. Arguably he is taking refuge in the technicality that torturers and carapachists do not perish, but Severian rarely bothers resorting to sophistry when seeking to deceive, and identifying himself to the rustic Casdoo as "Master Severian" permits no such challenge.

When the hipparch enters the rag shop to challenge Severian, the disguised figure is referred to as "he," although Severian who writes knows that the figure was in fact Agia. It is good to remember that the author allows himself such literary license, especially regarding questions of gender. The Autarch, although "agamite" and perhaps (as John Clute has argued) Severian's mother, is referred to throughout by the male pronoun. The "mandragora" or "homuncule" that Severian, now Autarch, discovers floating in a jar of alcohol in his private suite is, evidence allows us to conclude, a preserved human fetus. This creature (with whom Severian conducts a telepathic conversation) is referred to only by the neuter pronoun, but Severian gains a frontal view of its naked form, and so knows its gender. Like the troubled shade of *Peace's* Alden Dennis Weer, who withholds information yet seems compelled to circle the memories of those crimes he cannot confess, Severian consistently leaves, unnoticed among the sumptuous upholstery of the tetralogy's 1200 pages, keys (gender pronouns are not definitive; the homuncule's "tiny figure moved again under its little face looked up into my own") that themselves may be the clearest signs that panels exist to be opened.

Pursuing the minutiae of detail in an imaginative work is one of the legitimate pleasures of fantastic fiction, although as a critical method it is neither necessary nor sufficient. To accept the work's fictional framework as the context within which to study it is finally to judge the book on its author's terms, and while converts may seek nothing larger (admirers of Tolkien can seek clarification of puzzling points in the author's long Appendices, as though using a Baedeker to explore a real country; and Larry Niven reports getting long letters from fans of his *Known Space* series exploring implications he had not considered and proposing vast syntheses of his disparate elements), it is well to take a step back for the best appraising glance. The critical reader, confronted with a long novel which presents itself as a coherent imaginative work, will likely seek (like a good machinist) to test the tolerances of the vaulted piece, while remembering that such qualities do not constitute the last word: *Islandia*, although a prodigious feat in worldbuilding, does not of itself compel belief that its tale is great literature; and any attentive undergraduate can find inconsistencies in Tolkien's *Arda* Country.

So *The Book of the New Sun* is, first and in many ways foremost, a long narrative about Earth in the distant future, whose events may be taken on their face, as though we were in fact reading the Dickensian novel that Wolfe may have always wanted to write. Wolfe has not walked the streets of his subject city as young Box the court reporter did, but

his claim to offer us Nessus prompts us to demand he evince such authority, and he does succeed—or seems to, in a fiction the same thing. The work's fidelity and internal consistency persuades us, in fact, to extend the benefit of the doubt when seeming contradictions arise, in the confidence (advisable with very few writers) that an explanation is likely to hand. We know that the khalibits strikingly resemble the women for whom they double, being only somewhat shorter. When we learn, later and incidentally, that they are bred from the body cells of the exultant women—they are, in short, clones—we may wonder at the different height. It may be accounted for, we decide, by poorer nutrition; only Wolfe's track record justifies such credence.

Other details do fall of prolonged scrutiny. The time scale of the tetralogy is never made explicit, as the characters possess no clear idea of their history, and only a few details—such as the fact that Urth still has seven continents—can be adduced to suggest that the age of the Commonwealth lies millions of years (as opposed to tens or hundreds of millions) in our future. The sun is faltering, an event not expected for billions of years, but we know (from Typhon's account of his reign) that this proved a sudden, unpredicted calamity, and two further references—at Morwenna's execution and in Dr. Talos's play—suggest that it is being consumed by a tiny black hole. Yet we are also told that the moon is much closer to Urth—nearly twice as close, to judge from one of the few data given to us. We are presumably to take this as bespeaking deep futurity, but orbital ballistics dictate otherwise: the Moon is in fact receding slowly from the Earth, and while it will someday cease its retreat and begin a gradual return, by that time the Earth's rotation will have slowed to less than once a month and the Sun quite likely have burned out. Conceivably the Moon was wrestled into a closer orbit by the hand of man, but there is no indication of this (nor any good reason for it); and however delivered, a Moon only "fifty thousand leagues" away would exert enormous tides we never see.

Other details concerning the general conditions of Urth seem similarly shaky, such as the Commonwealth's destination in metals, which are not (like fossil fuels) consumed once used. On balance, Wolfe's setting is best treated as a literary one, a Vancian far future to be accepted as a given.

Establishing the proceedings, however, takes some doing when "the period of the manuscripts," as an Appendix puts it, has been written over by time-travelling revisionists like a medieval vellum. The Severian who tells his story is recognized as the future Autarch by various figures, who frequently intercede on his behalf. An earlier version of Severian had thus become Autarch without their efforts, which included arranging for the Claw to fall into his hands. Yet there is more to Severian's embroidered biography than this, more than one revision. The Claw is described (by the mandragora) as "but an unconscious exercise of your own power," which means that it served only as a focus for powers Severian already possessed. And as Severian notes, the first Severian was saved from drowning without the undine's help, so "something had already begun to reshape my life."

This is stated with unusual directness, with even its incompletion nature stated outright. Such is by no means Wolfe's usual procedure: when Severian, now Autarch, returns to the Inn of Lost Loves and questions Ouen the waiter, we are not told the reason for the line of inquiry he pursues, nor do we hear what he learns. The alert reader may piece it out on careful rereading (Severian wanted to know why Ouen had earlier recognized Dorcas; he realized that Ouen is Dorcas's son when he sees the locket, and that he is Ouen's son when their resemblance is remarked by the innkeeper), but at least two academic critics (C. N. Manlove and Thomas Clareson, in long and earnest essays) have utterly missed it. *Hebrews* 11:1 defines faith as "the evidence of things not seen," and *The Book of the New Sun*, a work containing numerous Biblical allusions, teems with significances not shown, nor easily seen. Before one can consort on easy terms with the concepts of Severian as Christ, Fisher King or Apollonian deity, one must uncover the evidence.

The question of Severian's family is as good a place to start as any, since Severian spends his childhood wondering about it, and seems chary of divulging what he learns. Ouen is his father, Dorcas and her unnamed husband his paternal grandparents, and his mother a "dark woman" named Catherine, who had run away from an order of monials and, pregnant, had fallen into the hands of the law. Catherine gave

birth to Severian in the Marachin Tower; and while nothing is explicitly said of her fate, many readers have identified her as the unnamed woman who comes to the Tower each year to play Katherine at the annual feast. Severian speculates that she may have consented to play her role "because of some old connection with our guild," and neutrally describes her in terms that make clear her resemblance to him. His reaction upon seeing her face, however, is far from dispassionate: "Hers was such a face as I have never seen elsewhere, like a pool of pure water found in the midst of a wood." Such a pool gives back one's own reflection.

Other relations lurk further back. Ava, the Pelerine who questions Severian in the lazaret, asks whether his name was not "one of those brother-sister names . . . Severian and Severa." Severian does not confirm this, any more than he can say whether he has a sister; but little Severian had a sister Severa, who was in fact his twin. He too asked if Severian had a sister. No question asked twice can be casual.

So who is Severian's sister? Casdow, mother of little Severian, was born in Thrax, and so must be disqualified. The woman who becomes Jolenta prompts some suspicion, if only because we never learn the name she bore before her unnatural transformation, but nothing more can be added.

A more appealing candidate is Merryn, the witch who appears with the Cumean set to the home of Apu-Punchau. Any girl born in the Marachin Tower is given to the witches, and the only comment Severian does make when asked whether he has a sister is, "If I do, she's a witch." Severian is elaborately indirect in letting us know that Merryn is the same age as himself (he recounts a long anecdote about a childish encounter with a witch "about twenty or a little less," then tells us that Merryn looked exactly like her); and her "dark eyes and serene face" seems to suggest Catherine. More interestingly, we are told (again via the description of the earlier witch) that Merryn has a face "so lovely and bloodless that it might have been a mask carved in ivory by some master sculptor." As Clute has noted, the image of the mask is associated with the face of Catherine, unchanging from year to year throughout Severian's childhood.

This sounds deeply suggestive, but seems finally to go nowhere. Merryn never reappears in the tetralogy, unless it is in deeply disguised form. Severian mentions no effort to seek her out after returning to Nessus, as he does with his father and grandparents. A suggestion remains, moreover, that "there are but two witches in the world, who are born into it again and again." If this is true (and the two witches could prove moreover merely an older and younger version of the same person), then it strongly recalls Valeria's claim that she is "all the sisters we breed. And all the sons." How this bears upon fraternal bonds I cannot say.

The other major candidate is the mandragora. "No more than two spans [sixteen inches] tall," it tells Severian that it was "deformed, and died before birth," and hints repeatedly at a connection between them. When Severian asks how he can hear it, it replies, "You hear yourself, as ever," and reminds him of a scene from his infancy. Twice it calls Severian brother.

If the mandragora is the stillborn Severa, we can more readily understand its presence in the text. "I am but an unconscious exercise of your own power, as the Claw was," it tells him, and so may well have been preserved in order to come into Severian's hands, as the Claw was.

Other details similarly stand out in their absence. Of the four books that Severian fetches from the Library for Thecla, he later makes a striking admission: "The books I carried to her became my university . . . [Any education he can claim] is owing solely to Thecla: the Thecla I remember, the Thecla who lives in me, and the four books." And he immediately adds: "What we read together and what we said off to one another, I shall not tell," which should alert any reader. What did these books contain?

Only one of them is named: *The Book of the Wonders of the Urth and Sky*, which is described as a once-standard work containing "most of the familiar legends of ancient times." Perhaps it is an enlarged edition of Hawthorne's *A Wonder Book*; the tale of Theseus and the minotaur, which Severian reads to Jonas, is contained in *Tanglewood Tales*, the second volume. (In a recent story, "The Haunted Boardinghouse," the *Wonder Book* is mentioned in the context of a treasured work, which any child should keep beside him.) Two of the other books are briefly

described: one, three times as wide as it is high and bearing arms on the cover, is first supposed to be a family history and later described as "the book of heraldry"; the second, bound in green and the smallest of all, "appeared to be a book of devotions, full of enameled pictures," and is later called "the book of theology." Of the fourth nothing at all is said, and nothing can be inferred save that it also is green.

Yet all of these books were important. The unnamed volume raises the most questions: too much cunning has been expended in not describing it and keeping that refusal inconspicuous. Only a few books are mentioned elsewhere in the tetralogy. The unnamed volume cannot be *The Book of Gold*, which is described as bound in a considerably faded black. The only other candidate is *The Book of the New Sun*, a supposedly lost volume (but Master Ultan makes plain that many of the books in his library are unknown to scholars) that Dr. Talos claims to have consulted in devising *Euchatology* and *Genesis*. Judging from the play, the book dealt with ancient legends relating to the Conciliator and New Sun, and would have concluded (Talos's title suggests) with the end of the old world and the beginning of the new.

To speculate that the fourth book was indeed *The Book of the New Sun* is to proceed on very little, but all other trails seem colder still. Severian is (or is to become) the New Sun, although as late as his ascension to the Autarchy he does not know this: when the aquator that bears the form of Malrubius implies it Severian fails to understand. So the volume that Severian had read with Thecla is not the text we are reading, nor is it likely to detail the wanderings of that first Severian upon leaving the Marachin Tower: although Wolfe has shown himself capable of ornate transports of self-referentiality (a trick he can play within as compact a unit as a sentence: "We are like children who look at print and see a serpent in the last letter but one, and a sword in the last"), for Severian to know as he trekked to Thrax and beyond that

Read This

Recently read and recommended by
Alexander Tablovsk:

Being a big fan of Oliver Sacks's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, I have lately read several other books by that delightful, if worrysome, expert, the literate physician. Say what you like about the decline of modern letters but you have to admit that popular science writing is enjoying a golden age.

Tocantini's Fumble and Newton's Madness by Harold Klawns. Klawns is a neurologist. It's a pleasure to watch him diagnose both his own cases and some from history, discovering neural information processing problems with wild effects like the loss of ability to play music. Newton may have had mercury poisoning and Emperor Maximian I acromegaly (Klawns even has his own complete collection of imperial portrait coins to show us). You'll go around hoping to find a case of subclavian steal syndrome or trigeminal neuralgia so that you can cleverly diagnose it.

Love's Executioner by Irving Yalom. While Klawns ferrets out neurological deficits that can cause complex mental malfunctions, Yalom deals with specifically psychological problems and starts to make psychiatry seem like something approaching a science. The case of the chemist who was so terrified of what was in three unopened letters that he became a paranoid reclusé until the writer of the letters died and their contents were revealed to be innocuous was my favorite. Maybe I'll open that letter from the bank now . . .

The Woods Hole Canasta by Gerald Weissman. Weissman is more a literary critic than Yalom or Klawns and writes about the place of medicine and doctors in society. He works at Bellevue and recounts a number of terrifying anecdotes about it. An analysis of why eighteenth-century English aristocrats and twentieth-century blacks were particularly prone to gout is an interesting case of concealed causes.

only some egregious misstep could keep him from a foretold rise to the throne would trivialize much of the novel. Severian proves to be the Conciliator as well (this surmise is confirmed in *The Urth of the New Sun*), so we must conclude that this ur-Book, which did not apprise Severian of his fate, recounts tales of the Conciliator, but not ones which would prompt Severian to recognize himself.

Enter now Wolfe himself, bearing gifts. When we cannot understand scripture we look to exegesis, and "The Books in *The Book of the New Sun*," a discursive little essay, tempts us to accept gloss from the creator, and disregard any inner questions as to why Wolfe, so deeply given to an art of encryption, might be willing to explain his mysteries. After expounding agreeably upon libraries and taking a swipe at critics, Wolfe does offer some revelations, confirming one's guess (very tentative, for textual clues are too sparse) that the "book of heraldry" is a history of Thecla's family, and noting that the book of devotions is a "euchology or formula of prayers." That much was obvious, but Wolfe also links the book's enameled pictures to Dorcas's cloisonné shop (few associations are less obvious), and invites us to deduce that the holy figures thus illustrated include aspects of the Conciliator. Wolfe then mentions that "his stories form what is now called *The Book of the New Sun*." We do not learn whether "his stories" are those the Conciliator told or those told about him, but the text does not specify either. And in his concluding paragraph, Wolfe says casually: "The fourth book, as the astute reader will have guessed long ago, is *The Book of the New Sun* itself."

So we have our four books, all of them important to Severian. *The Wonders of Urth and Sky* contains virtually all past legend, albeit enjambed and conflated ("the wisest of all the books of men," the Cumaeans say: "Though there are few that can gain any benefit from reading it"). Two books variously concern the Conciliator, from which the future Conciliator might learn much. Can the book of heraldry, a history of Thecla's exultant family, hold similar significance to Severian?

We never finished exploring Severian's family. Catherine is tall—as tall as an exultant bastard?—and Dorcas's husband (about whom we are told nothing but his decrepitude) is also of uncertain lineage. Dorcas's father and brother made the cloisonné she sold and established their shop, which seems to place her—a small woman with seemingly no exulted blood—securely in the class of modest optimates. Yet Hildegrin, who has seen exultants enough, remarks upon her "high-bred shape."

One of Dorcas's indistinct memories of her former life involves sitting at a window with "Trays and boxes, and a rood." A rood is a crucifix, something which appears infrequently in *The Book of the New*

Sun. Aside from a site in Nessus called Ctesiphon's Cross, the only other reference to a crucifix appears in the "narthex sign" used as the Pelerine's sign on the safe conduct letter Severian is given by Mannea. The Pelerines evidently use Christian imagery in their observances, which Severian pointedly refuses to describe, yet notes were "peculiar to them . . . though they may once have been universal." Did Dorcas's family make cloisonné roods for the Pelerines?

Any such connection would be difficult to trace, for the Pelerines are an aristocratic order, composed of exultants and armigeres. Yet the order does sometimes accept optimates' daughters, if the family has been benefactors to the order for a long time, and one of these is the postulant Ava. She too comes from Nessus, although not from the southern wastes Dorcas's family inhabited forty years ago (but they would have since moved). But Ava does not resemble Dorcas, and there is finally nothing significant to suggest a connection.

Dorcas's husband shows no signs of high birth. He carried on his back the cloisonné that Dorcas's family produced, and became destitute after her death. We may gather that he was not close to her family, and we know he did not have the respect of his son. Like Jolenta's, his past seems to have faded into the unmemorialized dust of the Commonality long before he made his single appearance in the text. The anonymous drab who became Jolenta similarly appeared only once, yet engendered someone important to Severian. And the autarch, whose name we also do not know, "carried a tray in the House Absolute." He worked under the mysterious Paeon, a honey-steward, and reached the throne, like Severian, "by chance." He is not tall, nor leaves any other clue to his lineage.

Three characters, all variously important to Severian, whose names we do not learn. In a long book that identifies by name even the most passing characters—Ja, Branwallader, Joseph, Eusignius—this is striking. Do names matter?

If Wolfe can most aptly liken Severian's role as writer to that of torturer, then the reader can acknowledge his own role in sifting evidence as that of the detective (Wolfe has more than once written of detectives) and avail himself of the detective's prerogatives of examining the subject's other actions—past and future—for evidence of a *modus operandi*. Certainly an assumed name would count.

This article will conclude in our next issue. It will appear in a volume of essays on Gene Wolfe forthcoming from Severian Press.

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Moscow, Now and Then: Text and Context

No Return by Alexander Kabakov, translated by Thomas Whitney

New York: William Morrow & Co., 1990; \$15.95 hc; 94 pages

Moscow 2042 by Vladimir Voinovich, translated by Richard Lourie

San Diego & New York: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990; \$12.95 tp; 431 pages

reviewed by Richard Terra

One of the most interesting aspects of these two works is just how quickly they have been overtaken by events in the Soviet Union, and what they have to say about the possible course of events yet to come.

Although it anticipates some of the more important developments of the last few years, Voinovich's *Moscow 2042* suffers from a sort of historical nearsightedness. The author's depiction of Moscow fifty years from now is far too timid, and has now been left behind by the changes sweeping through the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Kabakov's *No Return*, in ironic contrast, is chillingly precise in its projection of Moscow in 1993, and many of its anticipations have become realities. It will soon pass from the realm of social anticipation into historical commentary. Despite their contrasts, however, these two works reach toward similar—and quite grim—conclusions about the future of the Soviet Union, conclusions that are unfortunately proving to be all too accurate.

The earlier of the two, Voinovich's *Moscow 2042*, was conceived in 1980 just before the author, a satirist whose barbs were too often right

on target, was forced into exile outside the USSR—and well before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985. It was written in West Germany and was first published in English by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1987. The novel therefore fails to take into account most of the stormy events of the era of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

It's understandable that this work would suffer from a certain lack of vision: the Soviet Communist system had endured for seventy years, its Cold War empire in Eastern Europe for almost fifty. Peering another sixty years into the future (from 1982), Voinovich not surprisingly foresaw a Moscow similar to the one that existed in the declining years of Leonid Brezhnev—only more so. Still, Voinovich was able to anticipate the broad outlines of a possible course of events that is not too very far off the mark.

Moscow 2042 is the narrative of exiled Soviet writer Vitaly Kartsev, a thinly-disguised version of the author, who is given the miraculous opportunity to visit the future Moscow aboard a specially modified Lufthansa airliner. The science-fictional foundations of the book are

ridiculous; they are merely window dressing for a viciously farcical satire of contemporary Soviet Russia. The novel is basically a picaresque lampoon of every possible aspect of modern Moscow—from the Party apparatchiks and petty bureaucrats of the nomenklatura to the intelligentsia on down to the shopkeepers and attendants in the public restaurants. Voinovich writes in a breezy, witty and entertaining style, which seems to have been admirably captured by Richard Lourie's translation.

Prior to his departure, Kartsev is besieged by visitors anxious to gain from his visit to the future. Lyoshka Bukashev, a Party member and a faithless opportunist, hopes to learn the outcome of the struggle to build Communism. Kartsev flies to Canada to visit another exile, the dissident writer Sim Karnavalov, pretender to the Czarist throne, religious fundamentalist, and megalomaniac—a figure loosely modeled after author Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Kartsev arrives in 2042 to find Moscow has been declared, by government fiat, an ideal communist city-state, supplied, supported and surrounded by a decaying socialist empire in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The Cold War continues without heat or passion. The "ideal conditions" in Moscow are revealed to be something close to utter deprivation.

The city is ruled by an amalgam of the Party, the KGB and the military dominated by the semi-divine persona of the "Genialissimo" (genius + genial + generalissimo), who rules from orbit and is kept alive by an elixir distilled from human flesh. The Genialissimo turns out to be none other than Bukashev, the faithless party apparatchik.

Kartsev becomes embroiled in a hilariously complicated intrigue to prevent a coup by Karnavalov, who has kept himself on ice in Vienna until the Communist state begins to wither away... Much of the plot's humorous complications arise from the Party's attempts to convince Kartsev to rewrite a book he hasn't—in 1982, at least—yet written, titled, of course, *Moscow 2042*. Their hope is that by deleting all references to Sim Karnavalov and his "Sinite" supporters, his revolution can be prevented.

The novel ends when Karnavalov achieves his aim of restoring the monarchy, the Orthodox Church, serfdom and generally returning Russia to the dark ages.

Voinovich's novel partakes of the long and rich tradition of Russian social satire, harkening back in particular to Bulgakov's pungent satire of post-revolution Moscow, *The Master and the Margarita*. But to contemporary American readers, perhaps the most nearly analogous works would be the early novels of Kurt Vonnegut. Voinovich is absurd, farcical and grimly hilarious—and yet one never loses his meaning. The targets of his satire are kept firmly in his sights. But his novel remains in essence a satire of Moscow as it was—and largely still is—under the rule of a faltering Soviet state in the late 1970s and early '80s.

Kabakov's *No Return* is, on the other hand, as contemporary as today's headlines. Though a rather slight work—a short novella—the story caused quite a stir when it was published in the Soviet Union in June, 1989. An unflinchingly grim portrayal of what might lie in store for Moscow and the Soviet Union should perestroika fail, *No Return* is an unmistakable product of *glasnost*. It would have been inconceivable for a dystopian work of this sort to have been published only a few short years ago. (One need only consider the fate of the Strugatskys' *Ugly Swans*, a longer work but one with a similarly dark, pessimistic view of life in the Soviet Union. It was banned from publication.)

No Return tells of a young man named Yuri, who is employed by the state as an "extrapolator," a professional visionary. He is tapped by two agents of the KGB to anticipate conditions in Moscow in 1993—for them, five years hence. The mechanism by which Yuri obtains his visions of the future are never explained, but seem to occur as he enters the consciousness of his future self.

Kabakov's Moscow resembles a cold, dark Beirut. The economy and the government have collapsed, and the Soviet Union has decayed into a group of conflicting social, political, national, and ethnic fiefdoms. A rump state controlled by Party conservatives and a military dictator claim legitimacy, but the streets are ruled by gangs and vigilantes. Yuri carries a Kalashnikov assault rifle as a matter of course. Food and clothing are strictly rationed; a lucky few receive aid packages from relatives who have fled. Foreign embassies are guarded by U. N. troops (Chinese) and war rages in the Persian Gulf. Many of Kabakov's

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shrewd guesses about the future have already become the hard facts of real life.

No Return unfortunately suffers from many flaws. The writing seems rather stiff and uneven, although certain passages are quite beautifully done. Whether this is a fault in the original or the translation of Thomas Whitney, or in both, is uncertain. The plot is too slim, its characters too sketchy, to cohere into a real story. It is rather a series of dark vignettes, a contemplation of the very real potential for social chaos that may await Soviet citizens if current efforts at reform fail. Many of its elements will be familiar to readers of Western science fiction, but such grim pessimism, even as a cautionary alarm, is almost unheard-of in Soviet works. While its anticipation is perhaps too short-term to succeed as a complete work of fiction, *No Return* represents a daring attempt to confront issues and events that have long been evaded or censored from Soviet life. That it is also a dire warning of possibilities that are all too quickly becoming realities makes it all the more of interest.

Taken together, these two books offer some disconcertingly accurate projections of the possible course of events in the Soviet Union in the next few years: the rise of a consummate politician from within the Party whose reforms give way to social and economic chaos, paving the way for a takeover by a military dictator while the Union fragments into a dozen bickering nations.

William M. Schuyler, Jr.

E. R. Eddison's Metaphysics of the Hero

Being a hero is a state which is inherent in a person's individual essence. It has nothing to do with bravery or cowardice or any other trait of character. It has nothing to do with honor. It has nothing to do with deeds. However, there is behavior characteristic of the state. Heroes kill each other, for no more reason than because that is what heroes do. It is no accident that inhabitants of Valhalla spend their days fighting pitched battles for amusement, with the losers being resurrected and healed in time for dinner.

I have argued elsewhere that the acceptance of a certain kind of view of history is a precondition for the existence of heroes properly so-called (Schuyler). Briefly, I contended that it is implicit in the epic form that the acts of members of an elite are the only things that are really important, and that this must be accepted as the model for the historical process in order for there to be true heroes. Otherwise there are only men who perform brave and noble deeds.

Although this view is still widely accepted by romantics and movie producers, it does not agree with what we know of the workings of social and economic systems. In her discussion of style and character in heroic fantasy, Ursula K. Le Guin quotes several examples and remarks that the heroes she cites are crazy ("From Elfland to Poughkeepsie" 86-87). In terms of the laws of nature governing human behavior which apply to our world, she's right.

But what if heroes weren't crazy? What if their actions and reactions were entirely appropriate to and in accord with the world in which they lived? What kind of place does *Elfland* or whatever else we may call it, have to be for heroes to exist there and for the epic form to reflect its history without distortion?

Perhaps the best and most explicit vision of a hero's world is to be found in the works of E. R. Eddison. His fame rests on three novels plus a fragment of a fourth which was left incomplete at his death.¹ The relation of these works of fiction to each other is complex. In terms of the chronology of Zimiamvina, the world which Eddison created for his fantasies, *The Mesmerian Gate* (the fragment) comes first, although it was the last to be written. The events of *Mistress of Mistreus*, the second written, take up where *The Mesmerian Gate* leaves off. *A Fish Dinner in Membran*, third in order of writing, overlaps with the other two, treating of events in Zimiamvina (some of which had already been discussed in a different perspective), but parts of it are set in our world as well. The first

Both authors are acutely aware that their tales are not simply extreme "What if . . . ?" fantasies. Both books turn back on themselves with a reflexive self-awareness to link their extrapolated futures to the very real present (just as Kartsev finds himself reading his own unwritten *Moscow 2042*, Kabakov's Yuri comes upon a copy of *No Return*, the account of his extrapolatory visions he has not yet written). Both were written to serve as a warning. As Volonovich concludes his narrative through the voice of his hero: "May the reality of the future not resemble the one I describe here. Of course, in that event, my reputation for exceptional honesty will suffer some damage, but that I'm willing to accept. To hell with my reputation. As long as life's a little easier on people."

"And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the whole point" (p. 424).

As the resignation of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze amid the general political disorder throughout the Soviet Union in December, 1990 indicates, the fear that such things will come to pass is hardly the stuff of fiction in the USSR. Taken in isolation, neither of these books would stand very high among the best of Soviet science fiction. But in the context of the times, as meditations on the environment that produced them, they are well worth reading. ▀

Richard Terra has recently moved to Boise, Idaho.

to be written, *The Worm Ouroboros*, is connected with the others only by the way in which the narrative is framed. However, the philosophical content grows from book to book in the order in which they were written.

The story of *The Worm Ouroboros* is of a great war between the Demons and the Witches. Our sympathies are enlisted on the side of the Demons, who are more affable and honorable than the Witches. A terrible spell cast by the King of the Witches leads to disaster for the Demons (ch. v). They can recoup their loss only by undertaking a formidable quest. If they do not, or if they fail, they will lose the war (ch. viii). They succeed despite great peril (ch. xixviii). They can then set about turning the tide of the war, which until then had run against them (e.g., ch. xxii). As the Demons are on the verge of victory, one of the Witch generals destroys most of the remaining leadership of the Witches by treachery. The King of the Witches attempts one last spell, which goes dreadfully amiss, and the destruction of the Witches is complete (ch. xxxii).

But that is not the end of the story. The Demon leaders go home to practice the arts of peace. Things go well for awhile, but soon they find themselves thoroughly depressed. With the demise of the Witches, they have lost their purpose in life. *They have no one to fight*. But because of their great deeds, they have won the approval of the gods. They are granted a boon: the Witches are revived so that they and the Demons may contend again (ch. xxxiii).

It is important to emphasize that the Demon lords and their counterparts among the other peoples of Mercury, including the Witches (but not the Ghouls and the Imps, who are barbarians), are aristocrats in the best sense (cf. Le Guin 87). They are educated, cultured persons of discerning tastes. In short, they are not at all like the thugs who infested medieval Europe or Mycenaean Greece. It is simply that the urge to combat is part of their essence. It is not something learned. They could no more change their inclination to fight than lemmings could resist their urge to gather together and cast themselves into the sea.

Indeed, for them to attempt to resist this instinctive desire would not only be folly doomed to failure, it would be immoral. As far as Eddison is concerned, this is just as it should be. If we are different, we, not they, are morally inferior.

Thinking on why this might be so, Eddison was moved to create a larger and more complex scheme of things in terms of which he might explain it. The action of *The Worm Ouroboros* is set within a frame: a certain Lessingham awakes one night in his bed in England to find a martlet in his room. His soul leaves his body and follows the martlet to

¹He also translated *Ziggi's Saga*, and wrote a novel, *Spyriorn the Strong*, in saga form. One can see in them some of the influences which formed his fiction. There is no need to deal with two other books which are of little or no relevance to my present subject.

Michael Swanwick
Writing in My Sleep
(Second in a Series)

Believe it or not, as you will, the following piece is not directed at any particular critic or group of critics. Not consciously at least. It is one of a series of vignettes I've written in my sleep off and on for several years. They come straight from wherever dreams come, and are transcribed as accurately and little-changed from their first composition as possible.

However, I will admit to a grudgingly unkind liking for this particular dream.

"Critics"

I know of a planet very much like this one, save only that the leeches have a weak form of sentience. The hunger for identity is to them as basic as the hunger for blood. When an individual picks up a leech it sucks not only nourishment from his blood, but also the illusion of life, for it tastes the chemical byproducts of emotion, and so simple is its organization that it interprets these emotions as its own.

On this planet, the leeches are not only tolerated but actually considered fondly and in some cases even cherished. This is for an interesting reason: the leeches are poisoned by excessive concentrations of the very chemicals they crave, and thus cannot tolerate the blood of madmen, dissolutes or the intemperate. Hence, a fine healthy leech is a sign of mental stability and strength of character. It is for this reason that an upstanding citizen will often be seen with several leeches sprouting from his arms, and one awaggle from each cheek. "Your leeches speak well of you," they say in exalted circles.

But there is an unpleasant aspect to this social symbiosis. The leeches must be removed before they have attained a certain growth of size somewhere between that of a thumb and a breakfast sausage. If the visit to the surgeon is put off too long, the connective opening into the bloodstream is permanent and the leech cannot be removed without killing its host.

When this happens, the leech proceeds to grow very rapidly, both in size and organization. As it comes to identify more and more with its host, its form alters, sprouting tiny arms, legs and other features. It trends toward the homuncular. And it is at this point that the host begins to lose weight. As the small manikin grows, so its partner dwindles. They will be seen in the sordid parts of town, walking unsteadily together, each leaning to one side to accommodate their mutual cheek or chest. In character the secondaries are dull and avaricious, for the creature's primitive appetite remains unchanged.

Eventually the host will shrivel all but entirely and its remains will be swallowed up by the now manlike leech. The brain in particular, since the leech has no independent means of thought, is carefully preserved deep within the fatty layers, somewhere near the stomach.

The successful parasite may well prosper, and will be seen about town with a garish number of leeches dangling from its extremities. It will be most careful to have these leeches pruned regularly.

If not for its loud, bullying ways, it could now be mistaken for human.

Mercury, where, unbeknownst to the participants, he witnesses the remarkable events recounted in the story (xvii-xviii, 1).

Viewing *Worms* as independent of the others, which it very nearly is, the frame is unnecessary and clumsy, especially since it is cast aside after the first few pages. But Edision made Lessingham an important figure in the other books. We learn in *A Risk Dinner in Merlion* that the creation of our world was no more than a botched party trick at the eponymous Feast (290-295). Lessingham was just visiting here from the real world, Zimiamvia, during his life in England. The story of *Worms*, then, turns out to be doubly framed.² Mercury was an improvement on Earth, which was the point of letting Lessingham observe the former while visiting the latter and unaware of his real life in Zimiamvia. Even so, Mercury cannot measure up to reality, where the other novels are set.

In *Worms*, Edision presents, but does not reason for, his position that armed conflict is a moral necessity for the highest type of person. In the later works set in Zimiamvia, there is plenty of action, but the stories need not much concern us here. Although they are better conceived than *Worms*, which has flaws in plotting for all its merits, the author has shifted the emphasis from telling a story to imparting the philosophical foundations on which he has built his world.³

Like virtually every Englishman of his class and time, Edision had a classical education. It was perhaps a more lasting influence on him than it was on many of those who shared his background. His solutions to the problems of purpose and of injustice in a world created by divinity

are built on the framework erected by Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Schopenhauer. To this company, as will shortly be clear, we must add Spinoza. Despite his admiration for the sagas and their heroes, he turned to Greece when it came time to shape his philosophy of human nature: his later books are peppered with Latin and Greek. However, his interpretations of the modern philosophical tradition and the classical legacy are idiosyncratic.

He takes as his foundation the proposition that only consciousness of the present moment can be known to be real. (Descartes was right about where we must begin.) Reason can take us no further. (Hume's objections to Descartes' rationalism are sound.) Yet there must be something further which cannot be known by logic (as Kant maintains). This can be reached only by the poet's vision (else Schopenhauer's truth would be unavoidable). What the poet seeks is ultimate value, that which is desired in an end in itself and not as a means to something else. One ultimate value seems to be sufficient ("A Letter of Introduction" xx-xiii).

For Edision, following in the steps of such thinkers as Shaftesbury, that value is Beauty: all others, including Good, derive from it. However, one and many, universal and particular, abstract and concrete; each member of every pair is dependent on the other. Moreover, if value is the ground of existence, then "ought" implies "is": whatever exists must be what ought to exist ("Letter" xxiv-xxv).

There is, then, a multitude of beautiful things, and everything which exists is somehow beautiful. This seems contrary to our experi-

²The outer frame is almost certainly an afterthought, but it works well and lessens the awkwardness of the inner frame.

³It has been suggested to me that one should consider the possibility that Edision's introductory letters, which contain the most explicit statements of his philosophy, should be considered as fictions themselves, in the manner of Borges. As such, they would have been designed to produce a specious aura of authenticity while actually undermining the foundations of what follows.

I find it impossible to take this idea seriously. Borges deserved his

Nobel Prize, but it does not follow that every explanation by an author of what he is doing is an attempt to produce paradox. The purpose of such a ploy is to create the character of an author different from the person who is actually doing the writing. It works only if it can be expected that a fairly alert reader would be able to figure out what is going on. The degree of consistency between Edision's letters and his fiction is so high that no reasonable reader (dedicated deconstructionists are not reasonable readers) would find grounds to make such an inference.

ence, so our experience must somehow be placed in perspective so that it falls in line with theory. There is no need for the world to be as it is (or we could discover the necessity by reason). Therefore it must be that someone or something wanted it like this, and the best motive that Edisson can think of for that is that it is amusing, although it is certainly not who we are amused ("Letter" xxvii-xxix).

Who, then, is amused? The foundation of any value, including Beauty, is that it is desirable. In accord with Edisson's principle of complementary pairs, there must be one that desires and one that is desired. The complementary (not opposing) principles of his dualism are personified as Zeus and Aphrodite. The reason for choosing Zeus is that the father of gods is suitable for a creator, the critical role he fills in Edisson's fantasies. And who better than Aphrodite to personify Beauty and the object of desire? It is they who are in some way amused by this world as they, not we, see it ("Letter" xxv-xxvi).

The problem facing anyone who postulates a creator is why a perfect, self-sufficient being would have bothered to create the universe. Edisson's dualism provides a solution for this puzzle. All the worlds are created for love, as homages to Aphrodite. (But Aphrodite can also create. The world of Mezentius and his beloved Amalie, Duchess of Merismon, is her work ["To Colin" xi].)

In fact, Edisson's dual principles are not simple collections of opposites. Most of the pairs of opposites which we might expect to find polarized and confined to one of the deities are present in both. This is best seen in the parts which Zeus and Aphrodite play in their worlds. Each is incarnate separately and simultaneously in several humans. Edisson's simile is a dress—one wears it—but the metaphor is not rich enough. These incarnations are more than mere shells, for they have different personalities and their own individual human souls. Zeus and Aphrodite enter and live the lives of certain of their subjects. In some cases, the subjects are aware of their role as vessels for divinity (and those who are reveal in it); in others, they are not ("To Colin" xi-xii). The divine pair allow their vessels to act according to their nature whether they occupy them or not ("To Colin" xiii). A sensible regard for one's garments as well as one's pastimes demands that one not play tennis in evening dress nor attend a ball in tennis clothes. One wears the garb that is suitable to what one wishes to do.

To force a subject to go against his or her nature would be a form of cheating that would decrease the pleasure of playing the role, as any player of our contemporary role-playing games will tell you. The pleasure lies in adhering to the self-imposed strictures of the game and dealing with the circumstances that beset your character as they arise. I think this is a better metaphor than Edisson's for his purpose, although he probably would have had little patience with role-playing games. Human beings are not gods; our task is to get out and do things, not to play at it.

Yet sometimes it is necessary to intervene. Events will not of themselves always fall into the most pleasing patterns. For such cases there are nymphs and demi-gods who go about in the world. They have a language of their own, incomprehensible to humans (*The Mesentian Gate* 221), although they also speak the human tongue.⁸ They too have their dresses, which take the form of beasts whose temperament is compatible with theirs. They are aware, as humans are not, of the way things really are. Knowing their limits and their place, they are entirely satisfied by their subservient status.

Prominent among them are the naiad Campaspe and the oread Anthea. Campaspe is attractive rather than pretty. Her dresses are shy, gentle creatures: wrens, muskrats, and the like; their charms so subtle that they seem drab of aspect to the undiscerning, just as she herself does. Her talents lie in gathering information and coaxing the reluctant, which she does very effectively (*Misra* 119, 129). Anthea is a cold, perfect beauty. Her dresses are predators: lynxes, wolves, hawks. She coerces, and if necessary kills, again very effectively (*Gate* 159). Although the and Campaspe are very different, they get on well. Each is secure in her own competence, and each knows that the other has her uses. Their characters are consistent but limited in range.

By contrast, the roles played by Zeus and Aphrodite are varied and

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complex. Each may wear several dresses at once (although each wears only dresses of his or her own sex). But dark and light, active and contemplative, intellectual and sensual, creator and audience, the polarized members of the pairs of opposites in general—none are confined to one sex or the other, although they tend to appear clustered in the same combinations in the various dresses that the deities wear.⁶ This is a matter of preference on their part and serves as a clue to the divine nature and by extension to the ideal for human nature.

However, the central pair of opposites has not yet been examined: that of masculine and feminine, Love and Beauty.

The "good" man in action is therefore doing . . . what the divine eternal Masculine is doing: creating, serving, worshiping, enjoying, and loving Her, the divine eternal Feminine. And, by complement, the "good" woman . . . is doing, so far as in her lies, what the divine eternal Feminine is doing: completing and making up, that is to say, in her unique person, by and in her action and by and in her passivity, "whatsoever is or has been or shall be desirable, were it in earth or heaven" ("Letter" xxviii).

The feminine is indeed dependent on the masculine, but it is also true that the feminine is necessary for the existence of the masculine.

This "passivity" of the feminine in no way implies quiescence. It is rather that usually the feminine prefers to act indirectly to carry out its purposes, causing or inspiring the masculine to carry them out. In this it contrasts with the masculine, which usually prefers to act directly. This

⁶Perfect of his kind. Edisson's Zeus, like the Greek god, can make mistakes. It appears that some worlds have not been successful.

⁸Which is English. How could it be otherwise?

is, however, no more than a preference. On those memorable occasions when the feminine does choose to act directly, it is no less competent or effective than the masculine. For Eddison, the feminine differs from the masculine without being inferior to it, as the most cursory appraisal of his formidable women clearly shows.

The dual principles form a system of unselfish hedonism, or better, mutual agape. But agape is just one aspect of love. It includes eros as well as agape, as we can see from the passionate involvements of the great King Mezentius and Amalie, Duchess of Memison; of Duke Barganax and Florinda, each of whom is an incarnation of Zeus or Aphrodite. And it also encompasses philia, the intellectual love described by Spinoza, as expounded by the learned Dr. Vandermaast.

This intellectual love arises from exercise of intuition, which is contemplation of things under the form of eternity. Such contemplation is of eternal things by eternal things, in particular of God by the mind. It is infallible. It leads to the highest possible mental acquisition, which is (by definition) pleasure (Spinoza, Part V, Props. XXV-XXII). Thus from intuition

arises pleasure accompanied by the idea of God as cause . . . in so far as we understand him to be eternal; this . . . the intellectual love of God (Spinoza, Part V, Prop. XXXII, Corollary).

Intellectual love is not easy for human beings to manage, having as we do parts which are not eternal. It is obvious, however, that it is the natural way for gods to regard each other (although the monotheistic Spinoza would have objected to the plural). Hence the endless delight which Zeus and Aphrodite take in each other, which we finite beings can only partially grasp. It is also obvious that although this can be called hedonism, it is a very austere variety of it which does not conform to the way the term is usually understood.

This may seem difficult to square with the intermittent but endless war in these worlds that the gods have made. Yet Zeus traditionally took pleasure in conflict, and Aphrodite in some of her guises rather enjoyed it herself. The goddess of love was never a figure of unalloyed sweetness and light ("To Colin" xiii-xiv).

Combat among humans, then, proceeds under the aegis of this complex theistic dualism, which provides an explanation of why violence as a way of life is not only justifiable and necessary but good as well. Nor could this metaphysics of conflict be framed in such a way as to replace gods with impersonal principles: for Eddison, "the persons are the argument [i.e., the story]" ("To My Brother Colin" xiii).

And of course combat can be appreciated for its own sake. There is a widely held view that it takes war to bring people to develop the more austere virtues to the fullest possible extent, and that this result by and large is sufficient to outweigh the horrors that inevitably accompany

war. It is much harder to maintain this position nowadays in view of the form that modern wars take, but it might be argued that this would not apply to war as it was waged in "the good old days." Specifically, man-to-man combat with weapons that do not leave the hand would seem to be the model that should be followed for most effective development of virtue in the context of this view, as is seen by the general absence of effective projectile weapons not only in Eddison but also in other representatives of this type of neo-medieval setting.

There is also a more fundamental principle in operation here. Pleasure and satisfaction are found in a variety of forms, but like every member of every complementary pair they cannot truly exist without their opposites. The idyllic life which the Demons led in *Warm* after their great enemies were utterly destroyed left them unsatisfied. They needed war to savor peace. Likewise with the gods. Without conflict, the beauty of the worlds which are their creations would be reduced to a cloying sweetness.

A balance is essential. The sketchiest knowledge of medieval warfare as it was actually practiced is enough to convince one that an unvaried diet of it would be both revolting and degrading. For Eddison, combat can be conducive to aesthetic satisfaction only in juxtaposition with the arts of peace, and vice versa, but deadly combat is indispensable in an ideal world.

This seems rather hard on humans, who have to do the suffering and dying, but it is not as harsh as it seems. Zimiamvia is, as many Christians consider our world to be, a place of testing; not because the gods need to rest us but because it amuses them to do so ("Letter" xxx-xxvi). It is a game they play, and they are not amused if we fail to abide by the rules. Those who fail the test simply cease to be when they die, which is usually very soon after they demonstrate their unworthiness. (Dispatching them is one of the tasks assigned to Anthea.) For those who pass, there is happiness during their lives in the Aristotelian sense: activity according to their highest virtue, which differs from one person to the next, and in some cases is not especially high ("To Colin" xii), presumably there is a further reward. Although Eddison does not say what that might be, perhaps a game piece that does well is returned to the board in later games. Again, the parallel with characters in role-playing games comes to mind.

The point is that those who pass are those who know what their task in the world is and set out to do it. Whether or not they succeed is immaterial. What does matter is that each is born into circumstances in which the task may be undertaken. Zimiamvia is an ideal world in this respect as in others; there is no one born out of his or her time and no Milton mute because of the condition of his birth.

Thus the great monsters too pass their probation. Baleful Lord Emmius Parry, his viper daughter Rosma, his savage and treacherous nephew Lord Horius Parry; an ideal world would be a dull place indeed if it could not accommodate their like ("To Colin" xxi-xiii). No deity

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worthy of the divine state would forego them (*Gate* 233).

So we have what seems to be an eternal dualism, with the alternation of peace and war producing a world perfect for those who act according to their highest natures. That should suffice, even for the gods, yet it does not. Zeus grows terminally curious. Can he die? Not the kind of death he and she have died before, whereby all is forgotten and they recover in a sense their innocence and the childlike delight which lies in the rediscovery of forgotten powers. He is determined to attempt true and permanent extinction of himself though it means the extinction of all the worlds (*Gate* 227-228, 237-238).

He fails. Though he dies in the person of Mezentius, he survives in other garments, Barganax and Lessingham, for example, although they do not know it. What is missing in Zimiamvia for some undetermined length of time thereafter is not god, but god aware of who he is.

Nevertheless, the felt need of such a drastic measure raises disturbing questions about the adequacy of the system Edision has devised. In the "Letter of Introduction" to *Gate*, Edision says, "A very unearthly character of Zimiamvia that no one wants to change it" ("To Colin" xii). Nor does Mezentius/Zeus, for it is perfect, but perfection is no longer enough for him (*Gate* 227). It has become meaningless, and thus calls into question whether there be any meaning in existence at all. It also calls into question the perfection of Zeus. If he cannot truly die, is he omnipotent? If not, can he be perfect? If he is dissatisfied with perfection, is he not in conflict with his own highest nature and therefore imperfect? If he is imperfect, can his creations be perfect?

A caveat is in order here. Edision rejected the notion that his writings were allegory because characters in an allegory must act according to a preconceived plan of the author's rather than from their own inner necessities. Mezentius/Zeus was acting from his inner necessities, not because Edision wished to raise questions about the philosophical system set out in his Zimiamvia trilogy. The problems are in this sense not Edision's problems. This is not a precursor of postmodernist fantasy.

Yet the questions remain. In the matter of Zeus's omnipotence, Edision provided an easy answer: he could die, since there is no limit on omnipotence, not even impossibility, but he would not, for the sake of love (*Gate* 237). Zeus's failure to die must not be seen as an inability to act. To be unable in principle to do evil is not an inability to do something but rather a mark of the incorruptibility of his nature.⁷

Zeus's survival is not a failure but evidence of perfection. However, his dissatisfaction with perfection remains problematic. Edision says that "love has a searching curiosity which can never be wholly satisfied (and well that it cannot, or mankind might die of boredom)" ("To Colin" xiii). Dissatisfaction of that ilk is no imperfection, but this is different. Zeus is apparently determined to attempt to die utterly and

at a stroke end All. End it so as not so much as a dead universe nor a dead God be left to be remembered or forgotten, but only a Nothing not to be named or thought; ... no existence nor nonexistence ... (*Gate* 238)

⁷However, there are other answers available by inference:

Evil is not a thing, it is an absence of good in something. Just as it is impossible for nothing to become something, so also it is impossible for something to become nothing. To do evil would be to bring non-existence into existence; a contradiction in terms. For Zeus to die the true death would be evil, for it would bring into existence the non-existence of all the worlds, which are good (and therefore exist). Even God cannot do what is logically impossible (in this case, make an absence exist), but this is no limitation on omnipotence, because what is logically impossible is to do or become nothing. Hence Zeus cannot die the true death.

Again, according to Plato, the more nearly perfect something is, the less susceptible it is to any change in its nature, and perfection is necessarily eternal. It follows that what is perfect cannot become less than perfect, by the definition of perfection. Zeus is perfect. For him to die the true death would mean that he could change his nature, which would mean that he was not eternal. Therefore he cannot die.

These are stock arguments. They have their weaknesses, but they can be made to work.

Read This

Recently read and recommended by Janet Kagan:

One of the joys of writing science fiction is that the writer can read anything that appeals to her and claim she's doing research.

Try the following books. They're all "keepers" and I plan to reread them for the sheer fun of it.

Wily Violets and Underground Orchids: Revelations of a Botanist by Peter Bernhardt (William Morrow & Co., 1989).
In Search of Lost Roses by Thomas Christopher (Summit Books, 1989).

Their Blood Runs Cold by Whit Gibbons (The University of Alabama Press, 1983).

Wonderful Life by Stephen Jay Gould (W. W. Norton & Co., 1989) and anything else you find by Gould.

A Book of Bees by Sue Hubbell (Ballantine Books, 1989).
Carnivorous Plants by Adrian Slack (The MIT Press, 1989).

If you want to build a bat box of your own, *America's Neighborhood Bats* by Merlin D. Tuttle (University of Texas Press, 1988), will tell you how.

Also, for the fun of it, I recommend you take the lifetime subscription to *New Scientist* and that you snaffle copies of *The Wall Street Journal* from a yuppie friend (read the middle column on the front page).

P.S. Some of these will answer the age-old question, "Where do you get your crazy ideas?" Surely you don't think I'm making this stuff up, do you?

That is truly evil, to try to become the ultimate Nothing (*Gate* 238).

The problem can be resolved by recalling that the dresses of the gods have their own personalities and souls and that the gods when they wear them act in accord with the natures of their incarnations. This hunger for more than perfection is to be seen as something in the nature of Mezentius, not Zeus. We do not see it in Barganax and Lessingham. Zeus does speak of it in his own person—but only through the mouth of Mezentius. The flaw lies in Mezentius.

It is a flaw of the gravest kind. According to Edision, "Zimiamvia is ... like the saga-time: there is no malaise of the soul" ("To Colin" xii). Yet surely what afflicts Mezentius is malaise of the soul in its most virulent form. There can be only one conclusion: for all his high station and great deeds, Mezentius fails his probation. He dies the true death. Zeus does not, as we know from *Misraus of Misraus*: after Horius Parry has successfully procured his cousin Lessingham's assassination, he looks up into the face of Barganax and stands

as a man at whose feet suddenly opens the abyss. For there glared upon him out of that face not Barganax's eyes, but eyes speckled and grey: the eyes of Lessingham (443).

Although neither Lessingham nor Barganax knows himself for an incarnation of Zeus, the powers of the creator are in them nonetheless, and the worlds have survived.

But how can Zeus be perfect and yet produce a creation so disastrously flawed as Mezentius? The answer must lie in the nature of free will. No self-respecting god could be content with subjects who lack it, but with it comes unavoidably the possibility that they will make wrong choices. Mezentius, like every other human being, has this potential from the outset. Knowing what he is doing, and fully responsible for what he does, he makes the wrong choices that lead to his doom. He is the cause of his own downfall. Fortune, fate, and god play no part in it.⁸

⁸Part of what I have said must be counted speculation, as Edision did not live to complete *The Mezentian Gate*; but not much, for he did complete most of the crucial parts.

There is also a more abstract reason. God chooses the best of all possible worlds, but since there is an infinite number of possible worlds, we have no reason to assume that there is only one which is best. In fact there is an infinite number of perfect worlds (*Dinner* 278). Moreover, "sub specie aeternitatis, all that is good" (279). God therefore chooses all worlds, for those that appear imperfect to our limited perceptions are not so in reality (279).

The difficulties are resolved. Life is meaningful after all. For Zeus and Aphrodite, it is so because of the bond of love that unites them as complementary fundamental principles of a dualistic metaphysics. For human beings, it is so because Zeus and Aphrodite have taken care in their creations to give everyone a part to play if he will but play it. As we have seen, some of those parts are written for predators. We have also seen why this must be so in an ideal world.

Fighting and killing are therefore inevitable. We must appreciate, not deplore, them. Combat is to be savored in two ways: for itself, and for the relish it adds to our appreciation of peaceable pursuits, which must likewise be cherished in two ways. Our souls are enriched by strife, and though it often brings lives to an end which the short-sighted deem untimely, those who acquire themselves well go to a great reward, even if they are defeated.

We have, then, a complete metaphysical system to underpin a world in which there are true heroes who fight literally to their hearts' content. It has the advantages (if they are advantages) of taking into

account more of the range of human potential than the Greek or Norse pantheons allow and of allotting important roles to persons other than heroes and gods. It is not the only possible system which would permit such a world, but there are few others in what is avowed to be fiction that have been worked out in any detail. There is room in it for a Conan or a Frodo Baggins, but only in a bit part. There is no room for an Elric. A Severian might begin by thinking he lived there, but he would soon see through what would in his world be a façade.

Heroes and their followers are a breed apart in a world apart. It is a world in which economic constraints do not exist for members of their class. Even for others in that world, they do not exist. Although someone has to produce the worldly goods which are used, they will do so not for economic incentives but because production is according to their highest nature. It is a world in which, as Edlison said, no right-thinking person of any class wants to change the social order. That does not mean that the social order would not change if left to itself. As Edlison recognized in constructing his system, it would require divine intervention to guarantee that, and he supplies it. Too many authors fail to realize this, with the inevitable result that their characters who aspire to be heroes live not in Elfland but in Poughkeepsie. That is a sad thing, for their aspirations can never be realized there. ▴

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French Science Fiction and the *nouveau roman* *Surface de la planète* by Daniel Drode

Paris: Robert Laffont, 1976; 267 pages
 reviewed by Jean-Louis Trudel

Though this book actually contains four short stories in addition to the title novel, this review will focus on the novel itself, a resolutely modern and personal work that should still interest readers today, even though it was first published in 1959 (when it won the Prix Jules-Verne). Actually written between 1953 and 1955, and a bit on the short side, *Surface de la planète* (*Surface of the Planet*) was translated into Italian and Portuguese before being reprinted in 1976. It echoes many of the preoccupations expressed by Alain Robbe-Grillet as early as 1953 and, insofar as it is an unacknowledged *nouveau roman* (as defined by Robbe-Grillet), it might also be counted as a harbinger of science fiction's New Wave.

Surface de la planète especially parallels ideas published by Robbe-Grillet in a 1956 essay, "Une voie pour le roman futur" ("A Path for the Future Novel"), which criticized among other things the myth of *déjà vu* in literature. However, the novel also incorporates Drode's own theories about the appropriate language for science fiction novels of the future. As a result, it was controversial when it came out, and it sold well, but (despite reprinting in 1976) French publisher Gérard Klein was reported as saying recently that he would not dare reissue it now because he did not believe that modern French readers would accept it.

Yet, what instantly strikes a reader of today is how little Drode's story has aged. French of the same era was characterized by flat, straightforward narratives often concerned with extraterrestrial adventures of the space opera variety. Daniel Drode's subject matter might seem somewhat banal today: he describes a subterranean humanity cared for by robots and an all-encompassing System which secludes

individual humans into small cells with Phones and the Vision. This Vision serves as the sole source of entertainment for the *systematic* humans, providing a complete sensory hook-up into fictional or documentary creations of the System. One day, the System breaks down and humans must come to the Surface, where they find bewildered robots, mutant survivors of a long-ago nuclear war, and a species of bi-dimensional creatures slowly covering the whole surface of the planet.

However, in order to tell this story, Drode's language combines new words made from old, deliberate violations of regular syntax, typographic "innovations," and a generally fractured style which astonishes and irritates in turns. At times, it verges on modern poetry, collapsing epithets and grammatical units to create dense litany of prose.

This play with language extends from the recycling of archaic terms and the coining of new ones to rewordings of common idioms. Some new words fuse common adjectives, à la Lewis Carroll, like "platissant," "éclatonnant," or "sacréditées." Others are more subversive rewordings, such as "qu'onception" instead of "conception," with a new connotation pointing to the social and consensual nature of perception. A few common expressions are fused, as in "bon sens" becoming "bonsens," "bon vouloir" becoming "bonvouloir," or "il y a" shortening to "is." Finally, a few phrases are gratuitously, if provocatively, altered, such as "bonnes manières" becoming "connes manières."

The net effect of this linguistic labor is an unabashedly original voice that still speaks strongly to modern readers. At the time, Drode was accused of piling barbarisms onto solécismes for no good reason. A

Read This

Recently read and recommended by Judith Moffett:

Gaining Ground, by J. Trever MacFadyen. A cogent analysis of what's wrong with modern agricultural policy and practice, and some ideas about how to turn things around. Several of the book's cited experts mention the Old Order Amish as the best farmers in the country, but MacFadyen knows as well as you do that America's "mainstream" farmers aren't about to start thinking of their work as "the highest calling of the Lord," and his suggestions about how to save the family farm and move toward a "sustainable" agriculture are sensible and realistic. He's worried, though, and why shouldn't he be? Look what happened to the pesticides referendum in California.

Blueprint for a Green Planet, by John Seymour and Herbert Girardet. A clear, detailed, abundantly illustrated book that lists the world's ecological problems by category (agriculture, transportation, manufacturing, energy, etc.) and supplies some of the most creative answers I've seen anywhere in my years of wide-ranging reading on this subject. The authors admit in the preface that the book is directed toward individuals, that they aren't trying to tell governments what to do—and, frankly, I don't think the best efforts of committed individuals are going to be enough. All the same, this book will give anybody who's interested solid information on where and how to start working.

The Ages of Gaia, by James Lovelock. The originator of the Gaia hypothesis (that the Earth is a living organism) restates, develops, and expands his planetary thinking in this affecting follow-up to the controversial 1979 work. Seymour and Girardet (above), implicitly people-centric writers, want humanity's home restored as "a decent and beautiful place, not only for ourselves, but for all other forms of life too." Lovelock goes further: "It is the health of the planet that matters. . . . This is where Gaia and the environmental movements, which are concerned first with the health of people, part company." Lovelock sees and speaks from what he calls "a detached, extraterrestrial view of Earth," but it is a fiercely emotional and committed detachment, a bracing corrective to the assumption that when all's said and done, we are *why* our planet matters.

Harlan Hubbard: Life and Work, by Wendell Berry. A somewhat worshipful biography, just out from the University Press of Kentucky, by a Kentuckian who is a poet and novelist as well as one of the country's foremost spokespersons (*The Gift of Good Land*, *The Long-Legged House*) for agricultural reform. (Berry is one of those mentioned in MacFadyen's book as a deep admirer of the Amish.) His subject, Harlan Hubbard, was an artist who lived for more than thirty years on a homestead without electricity or modern plumbing in a place called Payne Hollow, a deep creek valley folded into the Kentucky bank of the Ohio River. The place is a few miles downstream and across the river from Hanover College in Indiana. I went to school at Hanover from 1960 to 1964,

years when homesteading at Payne Hollow was in full flower: goats and bees, smoked catfish from the trot lines, wild things from the garden, canning on a wood-burning cookstove, picture painting, piano and violin duets on Sunday afternoons. I stayed in touch with Harlan and his wife Anna until their deaths in 1986 and 1988, and went back many times to see them; and it's my view after twenty-five-plus years' familiarity with the lives described in these pages that where Harlan Hubbard is concerned, an attitude of admiration bordering on worshipfulness gets it just about right.

First Person Rural, *Second Person Rural*, *Third Person Rural*, and *Last Person Rural*, by Noel Perrin. Four collections of essays on country living in Vermont, dealing with everything from the creativity of pigs to sugaring to sharpening a chain saw to bartering homemade fence posts for other goods and services to making things like butter, maple candy, and apple cider ("Anything that doesn't actually squish goes in the basket"), by a splendidly stylish writer whose work has often appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Country Journal*, and *Harvardian Country Life*. Perrin is a frequent reviewer, and an acute critic of sf, and has taught both science fiction and environmental studies at Dartmouth, where he is a Professor of English. An individual who combines those particular skills and passions is worth his weight in maple candy to me personally, but even apart from that, these essays are pure joy to read. Perrin's writing is like nobody else's. I was very happy to see this "Last" volume appear from David Godine.

And finally, something a little different: *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*, by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis. There are a lot of us out here, and, as self-help books go, this one is exceptionally helpful. Most child-abuse victims repress the experience, have no memory that anything "happened." The authors cover their subject thoroughly, from describing symptoms (anxiety, flashbacks, etc.) by which a woman can recognize that she is a "survivor" (a term they prefer to "victim"), to detailing the steps of the healing process, to discussing the pros and cons of confronting the abuser. There's a section of fascinating personal accounts written by thirty survivors of abuse of widely differing degrees and varieties. Bass and Davis are especially good at explaining that there is no such thing as "mild" sexual abuse—that even if it seems too slight to matter, even if there was no penetration, even it was your brother and he was only a year older than you and it only happened once, if you've got the symptoms and the syndrome then it was abuse, and you need to start working on your own healing, ideally with the help of a therapist and/or a support group. Some of the recommended exercises were a little "California" for me, but overall I'd recommend this book to anybody who can't figure out why she started hating her uncle when she was ten, or why she now has panic attacks every evening between six and thirty.

year later, he argued in an essay that "S'il est logique, s'il va jusqu'au bout de sa pensée, s'il veut créer une anticipation totale, le romancier doit lancer dans le futur, d'un même mouvement, et le thème et la psychologie (cela ne s'est pas tant fait) et la forme où se moule sa fiction. . . ." ("Science-fiction à fiend," *Auteurs* 28-29 [April-May]). That is, subject, psychology, and form should be moved into the future with which a novel is concerned. Unlike some theoreticians, Drocé did provide examples of how to put this into practice: this novel and, to a lesser extent, some of his short stories.

Drocé's use and abuse of language disconcerted French critics with 18 The New York Review of Science Fiction

a *belle-lettre* orientation, but this may not have constituted the largest barrier to the book's acceptance. *Surface de la planète*'s structure and point of view bear witness to ideas and approaches expounded in the fifties by Alain Robbe-Grillet. Despite a discrepancy in dates, perhaps due to the incomplete information in my possession, the similarities between "Une voie pour le roman futur," dated 1956, and *Surface de la planète*, reportedly finished in 1955, are noteworthy. In "Une voie pour le roman futur," Robbe-Grillet argued that the mind hides the objects it is offered under layers of meaning, even though the world is neither pregnant with signification nor absurd: it simply is. He envis-

aged novels where things would be shown before being given meaning, to strip them of any misleading depth. "Quant aux personnages du roman, ils peuvent eux-mêmes être riches de multiples interprétations possibles." That is to say, characters would be impervious to all analyses, would be present before and after any commentary, any attempt at characterization or insight. Robbe-Grillet concluded by speculating that the metaphysical literature of yesterday was dying, while the surface, the appearance of things, was becoming more important than any illusory deeper meaning.

Does this seem like anathema? It did then, but Drode seems to have shared such convictions. In his novel, he opposes the humans from the System—from the depths of the planet—and the life on the Surface. Surface humans are called *superficiels*. However, neither *superficiel* nor *systematic* humans get much credit from the novel's narrator. Even this main character also answers to Robbe-Grillet specifications. He has no part apart from the empty life in the System, he does not delve inward, he has no defined goal... he simply is, acting and reacting. At one point, he laments the redundancies of a *superficiel* human's conversation, with its politeness and formalities which mask the purpose of the words. *Systematic* language has been shorn of such necessities. Nevertheless, it is also clear that *systematic* humans are extremely helpless on the Surface. However, these alternate interpretations may well be part of Drode's intentions.

One unanswered question is whether Drode's purpose in such a determined rewriting of the conventional novel was purely literary. In his 1976 introduction, Gérard Klein suggests that this experimentation was both the product and the vehicle of the author's personal political commitment. The book's writing coincides with France's war in Algeria, as enduring a trauma for France as the roughly equivalent United States involvement in Vietnam. Drode was one of the rare of writers in France to take a stand and his convictions may have played a role in giving his writing a causality that still burns today. Politics in the conventional sense may be the furthest thing from the narrator's mind, but Drode can frame many a *double entendre* about the System and

is hard to believe that sentences like "Pour eux, j'en suis sûr, l'hexagone est le foyer du monde" are entirely innocent, when one remembers that France is also called the Hexagon.

Final understanding of the novel's thrust is uncertain at best. The narrator drops hints, leaves possibly false trails. As the book ends, the reader is switched abruptly from the main narrator on the Surface to a man in a cell of the System, reading himself for another Vision, with the last sentence left incomplete, without punctuation. The whole sequence of the System's breakdown and the escape to the Surface may then have been only a Vision—it was specified early on that Visions often featured the Surface. However, Drode also indicates that the narrator may be living through an interference pattern of past and future.

A third possibility suggests itself. The man in the System's cell at the end may stand for the reader, from whom he is separated by no final punctuation marking the border between text and non-text. Then, beyond the facile comment on the reader as denizen of the System, there is also a reaffirmation that the whole story was nothing but a Vision—a fiction, a story. The story has no depths to plumb; it is nothing but a story, and this mapping onto itself of the story somehow induces vertigo, like the image of a mirror in a mirror.

Drode furnishes no definitive indication. Multiple interpretations coexist quite easily and this makes for a novel that is as frustrating as it is rich. Indeed, for all its inventiveness, for all its intertwining strands of discourse, for all its narrative ingenuity, *Surface de la planète* remains unsatisfying, most probably because while Drode uses of to justify his experiments with language and style, the science fiction component does not seem to benefit equally. This may be the crucial difference with later novels, both in French and in English, that were more successful at yoking both of *old* and *new* *roman* techniques to the task of writing a story... but somebody had to be first. ▶

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The Shield of Time by Poul Anderson

New York: Tor, 1990; \$18.95 hc; 359 pages

reviewed by Leonard Rysdyk

Poul Anderson's *The Shield of Time* is a novel of the Time Patrol, a multi-national, multi-temporal organization whose goal is to defend the continuity of history as we know it from the miscreants of the power-mad Exaltationists. As such, it is a rollicking good adventure story. Anderson has certainly done his homework and has filled his novel with bits of fascinating coterie, some of which cause the plot to turn and some of which appear just for fun. (Leonardo Fibonacci, the mathematician who introduced Arabic numerals into Europe, is mentioned merely in comparison to Manse Everard, the hero, whom Emperor Frederick of the Holy Roman Empire also finds interesting.) Some of Anderson's milieu are quite fresh: the characters spend a good deal of time in Beringia, the land-bridge that once linked Siberia and Alaska, during the time when the aborigines were being invaded by a new migration of humans from Asia. These later became the American Indians—whom we usually think of as the "original inhabitants" of the New World. Throughout, the action comes fast and furious as the principals flit about on their time cycles, keeping things in order for their mysterious masters from the future, the Danellians. (These are poised to be the next stage in human evolution and the theory among the Time Patrol goes that history as we know it must be preserved so that they will come into being. A suitably heroic task.)

The novel has all the signals that announce it as a "fun" kind of book including its main characters: Manse Everard, the hulking, pipesmoking Unattached super-agent and Wanda Tamberly, his blonde-haired, sumptuously-cherished and breathlessly naïve recruit. But the characters have their sensitive side and so does the novel itself. And that opens up a can of worms.

In a way, internal conflict between the need for violence and a loathing for it energizes *The Shield of Time*. The characters, especially the young recruit Tamberly, have to come to grips with violence and its inevitability. The book is not complacent about its internal conflict,

though perhaps it does not face it squarely enough.

When it comes to the point at which the Exaltationists are about to change the future and (by implication) wipe out the Danellians, the agents succeed not by stratagem or moral righteousness: they just kick some Exaltationist butt. Well, that's how wars are fought, I guess, and after all this is supposed to be an action-adventure novel; it wouldn't make much sense to leave out the action. The problem, though, is that this hamfisted approach to preservationism takes place against a rhetorical background where the violence of history is deplored. Everard constantly expresses bitterness at the violence of history and the violence he himself must exercise, albeit he considers it a necessary evil. The entire adventure in Beringia is extended because Tamberly, native of a no less peace-mongering place than 60s Berkeley, wants to protect the peaceful (though culturally inferior and therefore doomed) native Beringians from the cruelties concomitant with their submersion in the oncoming Asian culture. Her sensitivity is established beyond doubt. After he bails her out of the trouble she has caused, Everard tells her she's special. "You're not a cop," he says and we are set up for some later resolution that does not rely on the violence that is his stock in trade. Yet, when the plot thickens, push does indeed come to shove and blood is spilled. The book's final adventure has to do with problems caused by the offspring of one Lorenzo de Conti. Everard suggests simply killing the guy—"Off him!" Tamberly asks in one of her few slips into the vernacular or other birthtime—but Lorenzo is such a sweet, swell guy that she and Everard decide to trick him into abandoning his fateful marriage and going off to the Crusades ahead of schedule. But, at the last moment, Lorenzo detects their ruse (he's smart, too) and gets the drop on the Time Patrolman and -woman. So they kill him anyway. In the denouement, Everard says, "I've killed before and probably I will again. I wish to Christ things were otherwise, but they aren't and I can't afford to brood over it. Nor can you." But the book does brood over it.

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In a way, Anderson is trapped. To keep up the action, he must keep up the violence; and to be fair, this book is no more violent (nor sorry about violence) than his others. The problem here is that the causes for the violence are a little less clever than they ought to be. In a similar book written many years ago, Anderson solved this problem more gracefully. In *The Corridors of Time*, the climactic battle is interesting not so much for the actual fights as for the strategies that bring them about. There, the antagonist is from the nineteenth century, the protagonist from the twentieth. The protagonist wins not because he is faster on the draw, but because he employs the changes in thinking that the twentieth century had wrought on his mind. The resolution transcended the mere action of the battle. The reader felt he had learned something from the romp through time and the battle of wits that was really what the book was about.

Thus one remains of two minds about *The Shield of Time*. On the one hand it is what it was meant to be: a straightforward, though historically informed, adventure. It is fun and the locales and details are fascinating. It is even energized by an internal conflict that keeps the

readers on their toes. On the other hand, its moral baggage weighs it down and forces us to consider seriously the implications of violence that a simple adventure story is better off leaving alone. In the end, it relies too often on too-easy answers.

One cannot help but think that Anderson missed the boat here. Though it is traditional to take the side of the conservatives in writing adventure fiction, in this case the side of the Exaltationists might offer more possibilities. Could they not be—instead of mere power-grabbers—genuinely concerned, though misguided, idealists who want to rewrite history to expunge its cruelties? Perhaps that would shed more light on the Danellians as well. After all, if there are going to be superior creatures in the book, shouldn't they make more than merely one cameo appearance? Shouldn't they have more to say than "Reality is. You are among those who guard it?"

Leonard Rydick's review of Arthur C. Clarke's *The Ghost from the Grand Banks* appears on page 7 of this issue.

Greg Cox
Excerpts from *The Transylvanian Library:*
A Consumer's Guide to Vampire Fiction

DICK, PHILIP K.

"The Cookie Lady" (*Fantasy Fiction*, June 1953: 8 pp.)

Temptation is the theme of this short story by a celebrated science fiction writer, temptation in two very different forms. . . .

Despite his parents' warnings, young Bubber Serle cannot resist the milk and cookies he finds at the house of Mrs. Drew, the lonely old woman who lives down the street—and who discovers, late in life, an unexplained talent for psychic vampirism. Being with Bubber makes Mrs. Drew feel younger, and look younger too, if only for the too-brief duration of the child's visit. Dick's story emphasizes the pain and sadness of old age, as well as the joy of restored youth and beauty, so that by the end one can understand why even so gentle a creature as "The Cookie Lady" might finally take more than Bubber can spare.



BIXBY, JEROME and JOE E. DEAN

"Share Alike" (*Beyond*, July 1953: 15 pp.)

Bad enough, one might think to be adrift in a lifeboat in the middle of the ocean, with only limited food and small hope of rescue. Even worse when the only other man in the boat turns out to be a vampire.

To young Craig's surprise, however, his Romanian companion turns out to be both likeable and considerate. True, he insists on drinking from Craig each night but only in exchange for his share of their dwindling food rations. This is symbiosis, not theft, and even though Craig's conservative conscience rebels at the thought, he can't help describing the vampire's bite as sensual, thrilling, lascivious, and "almost sexual" (emphasis mine). In the end, it is not horror but guilt that drives Craig to betray the other just as they're on the verge of being rescued, guilt over enjoying what should have been a nightmare.

For purposes of the plot, the authors were obliged to dismiss several vampire traditions as superstition; their bloodthirsty Romanian, Eric Hofmansthal, cannot simply fly away from the boat, nor is he destroyed by exposure to the sun. Various scientific theories are toyed with, each explaining the origin of Hofmansthal's kind, but ultimately the nature of vampirism remains mysterious. We learn only that vampires are sort of inhuman, not noticeably hellish—and definitely contagious.



HENSLEY, JOE L.

"And Not Quite Human" (*Beyond*, September 1953: 12 pp.)

The transition from the supernatural to the scientific was not

entirely peaceful, mind you. While they may have been forced to adapt to the times, the old monsters were not above a little sabotage occasionally.

Take this story, for example. Set entirely aboard an Arcturian spaceship, it takes place shortly after an extraterrestrial attack. Earth has been scorched with radioactivity. Only forty-four Terrans survived to be taken prisoner. Clearly, this is a tale of future horror.

However. . . .

One by one, the alien spacemen start dying. Weird shadows haunt the corridors. Someone should have recalled the doomed voyage of the *Demeter* (see STOKER)—except that the aliens have never heard of vampires.

"It was a wonderful attack, Captain," the eldest Terran eventually explains. "Nothing human could have lived through it—nothing human did."

Basically, this is just "The Devil Is Not Mocked" in outer space, but spookier because the ever-so-scientific Arcturians have no idea what is destroying them. They have forgotten how to dream, let alone cope with nightmares.



STURGEON, THEODORE

"The Music" (*E Pluribus Unum*, 1953: 2 pp.)

Some of Your Blood (Ballantine, 1961: 150 pp.)

Is "The Music" a first-person account of vampirism, or merely a peek inside the head of a lunatic who thinks he's a vampire? This short, moody, and elegantly written story, about an inmate in a sanitarium who is aroused enough by the music of the night—and the sight of rat being killed by a hungry feline—to feast himself on the nearest passing nurse, is open to interpretation. The sensual romanticism of the narrator's perceptions might remind modern readers of the genuine nosferatu of Anne Rice's fiction, but I can't help leaning towards a less inhuman, more psychological reading, especially when one considers the novel Sturgeon wrote a few years later. . . .

The problem in *Some of Your Blood* is this: It is wartime, and somewhere in the psychiatric ward of a swamped Veteran's Hospital a patient has been discovered, after being forgotten for months. No one, unfortunately, is quite sure why the man was committed in the first place. His commanding officer knew, but the CO has since perished overseas. Any pertinent records are lost or misplaced.

So why is "George Smith" in solitary confinement? And is it safe to release him?

Some of Your Blood is a psychological detective story, as a determined doctor sets out to answer the questions posed above, using every trick in the analytic arsenal: Rorschach tests, hypnosis, Thematic Apperception

tion Tests, and slow biographical research. What eventually emerges is a detailed and sympathetic portrait of a Human Vampire.

Like *Doctors Wear Scarves*, published a year before, this book examines vampirism as a psycho-pathological condition. The diagnosis here, however, is quite different; whereas *Doctors* presents vampirism as a lethal type of sexually-expressed aggression (hate disguised as love), Sturgeon's vampire is a case study in emotion retardation, a man who can only relate to others on the most infantile level—"like a wildly sucking baby."

Because "George Smith" is a powerful man, physically, and ethically arrested to boot, what we have here is a very dangerous sort of human monster.

Nevertheless, Sturgeon clearly does not want to condemn his vampire, who is only the victim of an "execrable" childhood and an unconventional neurosis. (The Reluctant Vampire again!) As the compassionate doctor explains to his patient:

"So there you go, George: did you ever know before that your desire for blood came from outside you, by the things that happened to you, and not really from inside at all?"

And later:

"Everyone on earth feels lonely sometimes, lost sometimes. Just the way you do. Everybody has his own way of handling it, just as you had a way."

Even though the novel was apparently based on a true story, the ending is definitely ambiguous. Sturgeon leaves open the possibility of a happy ending (for George, as well as society), but leaves his vampire's fate to the mercy of the reader.

The sexual content of *Some of Your Blood* (specifically, the revelation that George has been drinking his girlfriend's menstrual blood) attracted attention at the time of its initial publication. (Nowadays, such a scene is not uncommon; see GARTON and SOMTOW.) Still, the tone of the book is clinical, not titillating. Trust me, no one can talk about sex as dispassionately as a psychiatrist-narrator.

A memorable book, this. Brief, but fascinating. It is a great vampire story, but hard to assign a genre to. Look for it in bookshelves set aside for "horror," "science fiction," "mystery," or maybe even "literature." The vampire's real name, by the way, is eventually revealed in a classic throwaway line.

Bela.

(Note: a theatrical version was staged in Liverpool in 1986 under the title *Psychosis Unclassified*.)

METCALFE, JOHN

The Feasting Dead (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1954: 125 pp.)

This hard-to-find little horror novel, originally published as a limited edition of only 1200 copies, is, in more ways than one, something of a curiosity. For one thing, despite its origin in the Futuristic Riffra, this is a gloomy Gothic melodrama reminiscent of both "Carmilla" and "The Sad Story of a Vampire." Furthermore, the titular male vampire has unusual distinction of being bland in appearance, as well as vaguely homosexual.

Who is Raoul Privache—and what does his young victim see in him? Neither question is ever satisfactorily answered in this shadowy tale of a retired colonel whose son is enthralled and destroyed by some sort of vampire-ghost. Privache, eighty years dead, identified only as "the nameless," first appears as an inconspicuous, characterless lump of a man, then later as an animated scarecrow. Only young Denis finds him irresistible, for reasons which remain unclear to his worried father, a remarkably passive narrator whose growing unease never quite motivates him to do anything, let alone concede the existence of a truly supernatural menace.

The result is an overall tone of dolorous fear and uncertainty, unrelieved even at the end. Effective, yes, but also somewhat disappointing. It's no surprise this novel has remained, also in more ways than

one, obscure.

BEAUMONT, CHARLES (Pseudonym of Charles Nutt)
"Place of Meeting" (*Orbis*, February 1954: 5 pp.)
"Blood Brother" (1961: 6 pp.)

Modern times take their toll on old-fashioned vamps in two very different stories:

After "the gas bombs and the disease and the flying pestilences" destroy mankind, a small group of men, women, and children gather at the "Place of Meeting" to compare notes on Armageddon and wonder what to do next. Not too surprisingly (especially for those who read "And Not Quite Human" a few months before), these survivors are quite definitely Undead. This time, though, their triumph over the doomsday weapons is a Pyrrhic one: without mortals (or defenseless aliens) to consume, the *nosferatus* must go back to their graves and sleep—until someday, perhaps, when life again is born on Earth.

The Cold War between science fiction and horror continues, with the vampires taking most of the damage this time.

When vampires were endowed with human feelings, they inevitably acquired the human need for professional counseling. Mr. Smith, the "Blood Brother" of this story, is just one of many fictional bloodsuckers who have sought out the services of a human psychiatrist. See also: CAMPBELL, CHARNAS, DREADSTONE, HURWOOD, SOMTOW, and STURGEON.

Beaumont's version is strictly for laughs. Poor Smith, only recently vampirized, is an average 20th Century male, forced by "the rules" to act like Bela Lugosi. If nothing else, he makes it very clear that the life of a traditional vampire is no picnic:

"Why it doesn't take *anything* to knock us over. If we don't cut our throats trying to shave—you know, the mirror bit: no reflection—we stand a chance to land flat on our backs because the neighbor downstairs is cooking garlic. Or bring us a little running water, see what happens. Or silver bullets. *Daylight*, for crying out loud!"

Count Dracula would probably take offense, but it's still a funny story.

BROWN, FREDRIC

"Blood" (*Fantasy and Science Fiction*, February 1955: 5 pp.)

Who told the first vampire joke? History has forgotten, but not even so fearsome a concept as the Living Dead can be taken seriously all the time. Vampire-comedy is a genre all its own, producing movies like *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (with Bela Lugosi as the Count), *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (subtitled "Pardon Me, But Your Teeth Are In My Neck"), *The Maltese Bippy*, *Vampira* (also known as *Old Dracula*, but a mess under any name), *Once Bitten*, *Transylvania 6-5000*, *Vamp*, and (definitely the best of the lot) *Love At First Bite*.

Most written vampire humor, though, comes in the form of short stories, which usually take all the old traditions intact—and run them headlong into some unexpected new twist.

"Blood" is a classic example. Two Undead schemers use the obligatory 1950s sci-fi gimmick (a time machine) to seek fresh hunting grounds in the distant future. Alas, evolution plays them a nasty trick: Sentient tumors inhabit the earth.

And if there's one thing you can't get blood out of. . .

For more giggles, see ALLEN, BEAUMONT, CARR, CASPER, CHETWYND-HAYES, FRITCH, KAYE, KNIGHT, LINSEN, RANSOM, and RUSSELL.

Work in Progress

A Bibliographic Checklist of First Editions, by L. W. Currey

Final Draft. Revised 1/91

KEITH JOHN KINGSTON ROBERTS

b. 1935

ANITA. *New York: Ace Books, [1970].*

Wrappers. No statement of printing on copyright page. *Ace Book 02295 (754).*

ALSO: [London]: Millington, [1976]. Boards. *First published in Great Britain in 1976 . . . on copyright page. First hardcover edition.*

ALSO: Philadelphia: Owlswick Press, [1990]. No statement of printing on copyright page. Expanded text. Adds "Anita: An Introduction" and story "The Checkout" by Roberts; some revision of story texts.

THE BOAT OF FATE. *London: Hutchinson, [1971].*

Boards. *First published 1971 on copyright page.*

THE CHALK GIANTS. *London: Hutchinson, [1974].*

Boards. *First published 1974 on copyright page.*

ALSO: *New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, [1975]. First American edition 1975 on copyright page. Textual revisions.*

THE EVENT. [Scotforth, Lancaster: Morrigan Publications, 1989.]

Wrappers. 300 copies printed. Statement of limitation on cover 2 reads: *This first edition of The Event is limited to 300 copies/ Copy No. [holograph number inserted].* Note: This story was also printed in the limited issues of WINTERWOOD AND OTHER HAUNTINGS.

THE FURIES. [New York]: Published by Berkley Publishing Corporation, [1966].

Wrappers. January, 1966 on copyright page. *Berkley Medallion FL117 (506).*

ALSO: [London]: Rupert Hart-Davis, [1966]. Boards. *First published 1966 on copyright page. First hardcover edition.*

THE GRAIN KINGS. *London: Hutchinson, [1976].*

Boards. *First published 1976 on copyright page.*

GRAINNE. [Nomanland, Salisbury, Wiltshire]: Kerosina Books, 1987.

1026 copies printed. Three issues, no priority: (A) 26 lettered copies bound in quarter leather reserved for private distribution [not seen]. (B) Brown cloth, spine panel stamped in gold. 250 numbered copies signed by Roberts. Note: Enclosed in cloth slipcase with hardbound copy of Roberts' poetry collection *A Horse Caught in Woods*. (C) Brown boards, spine panel stamped in gold. 750 trade copies. *This First Edition of Grainne has been limited to 1026 copies . . . on copyright page.*

THE INNER WHEEL. *London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1970.*

Boards. *First published in Great Britain 1970 on copyright page.*

KAETI & COMPANY. [Nomanland, Salisbury, Wiltshire]: Kerosina Books, 1986.

1026 copies printed. Three issues, no priority: (A) 26 lettered copies reserved for private distribution [not seen]. (B) Green boards, spine panel lettered in gold. 200 numbered copies signed by Roberts. Note: This issue accompanied by booklet, KAETI'S APOCALYPSE, printing an eleventh Kaeti story by Roberts.

(C) Binding as per binding B. 800 trade copies. *This First Edition of Kaeti & Company has been limited to 1026 copies . . . on copyright page.*

KAETI'S APOCALYPSE. [Nomanland, Salisbury, Wiltshire]: Kerosina Books, 1986.

Wrappers. *This edition limited to 300 copies only on copyright page.* Note: Copies of this booklet were distributed with the limited issues of KAETI & COMPANY.

KITEWORLD. *London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1985.*

Boards. *First published in Great Britain 1985 on copyright page.*

LADIES FROM HELL. *London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1979.*

Boards. No statement of printing on copyright page.

THE LORDLY ONES. *London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1986.*

Boards. *First published in Great Britain 1986 on copyright page.*

MACHINES AND MEN. *London: Hutchinson, [1973].*

Boards. *First published 1973 on copyright page.*

MOLLY ZERO. *London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1980.*

Boards. No statement of printing on copyright page.

THE PASSING OF THE DRAGONS. [New York]: Published by Berkley Publishing Corporation, [1977].

Wrappers. April, 1977 on copyright page. *A Berkley Medallion Book 0-425-03477-1 (\$1.25).*

PAVANE. *London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968.*

Boards. *First published 1968 on copyright page.*

ALSO: Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968. First edition so stated on copyright page. Enlarged edition. Adds "The White Boat."

THE ROAD TO PARADISE. [Worcester Park, Surrey]: Kerosina Books, 1988 [i.e. January 1989].

1026 copies printed. Three issues, no priority: (A) 26 lettered copies bound in quarter leather reserved for private distribution [not seen]. (B) Olive-green cloth, spine panel stamped in gold. 250 numbered copies signed by Roberts. Note: Enclosed in cloth slipcase with hardbound issue of Roberts' *Irish Encounters*, a nonfiction account of a trip to Ireland. (C) Olive-green boards, spine panel stamped in gold. 750 trade copies. *This First Edition of The Road to Paradise has been limited to 1026 copies . . . on copyright page.*

WINTERWOOD AND OTHER HAUNTINGS. [Scotforth, Lancs.]: Morrigan Publications, 1989.

Three issues, no priority: (A) 10 copies bound in quarter leather reserved by the publisher for private distribution [not seen]. (B) Blue cloth, spine panel lettered in white. 250 numbered copies signed by Roberts and introducer Robert Holdstock. In cloth slipcase. Note: Issues A and B add short story "The Event," Pages [i]-xii. (C) Black boards, spine panel lettered in white. Trade edition. *Of this first edition . . . on copyright page.* Note: See THE EVENT for separate publication.

Note: This is part of a series of bibliographic checklists of sf and fantasy writers that will update, revise, and expand the standard reference work, *Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors by L. W. Currey*. For the organizational principles and methodology used in this and future lists, please refer to the introduction to that work. Knowledgeable persons are invited to communicate addenda and corrigenda directly to L. W. Currey, Elizabethtown, NY 12832.

Screed

(letters of comment)

Ramsey Campbell, Marseyside, England

Greg Cox's thoughts on Everil Worrell's "The Canal" (NYRSF #27, page 20) prompt me to wonder which version of the tale he has read. Though "The Canal" first appeared in *Weird Tales* for December 1927, as far as I know the only version to end as he describes it was published in August Derleth's 1947 anthology *The Sleeping and the Dead*. I haven't any access to the original publication, but I do have *Weird Tales* for April 1935, which reprints the story, presumably verbatim. Here the narrator is persuaded to release a horde of vampires ("bats as large as men and women") from a cave, and his vampire lover joins them in creeping into the tents of the nearby summer camp (at which point the narrative more or less rejoins the version Greg cites). Unable to persuade the campers of their peril, the narrator plans to dynamite both the camp and the cave and then drown himself (though, since he intends to do the dynamiting the night after the vampires' feast, it's unclear whether it will achieve much).

I assume the version in the Derleth book is Worrell's final draft, even though the version I've described turned up in *Phantom*, a British magazine of the late fifties which drew much of its material from *Weird Tales*. I wonder if it may have been rewritten at Derleth's suggestion? As well as some shaky plotting the narrator is needed to open the cave because "a human hand must remove the stone") the anthologized version loses some purplish prose. For instance, "The laughter that greeted my speech I shall never forget—not in the depths under the scummy surface of the canal—not in the empty places between the worlds, where my tortured soul may wander" ends at "never forget" in the Derleth version.

Another Worrell tale Greg might find, er, interesting is "The Hollow Moon" (*Weird Tales*, May 1939; reprinted in *Phantom*, November 1957). In this, survivors of a shipwreck are taken aboard a kind of submarine-cum-spacehopper by a caped villain called Le Noir and flown to the moon, where the darkness is a haven for vampires. The moon proves to be plectured by a shaft which contains the atmosphere the moon had when it was part of Earth and which is held there by gravity because of its "far greater viscosity". "The Hollow Moon" may go nowhere as a story, but by God it stays in the mind. Who was Everil Worrell? Where is she now?

Robert A. Collins, Boca Raton, Florida

It certainly does seem circuitous to find a response in "Screed" to my letter in the *SFRA Newsletter's* "Feedback" column [see NYRSF #25]. I do wish Virginia Kidd had sent her missive to SFRA editor Betsy Harfst. Betsy was trying to stir up some response, and I was trying to help her. She needed the letter—I doubt that NYRSF did.

As for Virginia's complaints, I can only explain that the engine of rhetoric carried me away (all those parallel phrases beginning with "all"). I had no wish to vilify Judith Moffett (I admire what I've read of hers, though I did not read *Penitence*) and have already apologized to her. Of course I admire Gardner Dozois as an editor, and as a great human being for that matter.

But I still think "packaged" series playing upon an absent author's fame are a shoddy merchandising trick, productive of nothing but schlock as a rule. Homage is one thing, but "in the world of" is worse than Nancy Drew. Of course there are always exceptions, but acknowledging them spoils the rhetoric. I assumed everyone would recognize hyperbole when they saw it.

Robert A. Collins, Boca Raton, Florida

I was delighted to see Ellen Weill's careful explication of Aldiss's *Forgotten Life*, establishing the parallel between the protagonist's dead brother Joseph and Aldiss's own biography. Yet Weill never discusses the protagonist (Clement Winter, an Oxford don) of that novel, and I was again disturbed by the very question that kept me from completing my own review of the book: Why did the author bury himself in that memoir (a text the protagonist eventually concludes is

"unpublishable")?

I had some theories at the time. I think it was John Donne who first articulated the notion that "all knowledge is a mummy"—that only dead things can be perfectly understood. Perhaps in memory (or in fantasy) the completed life can have form, a mythic structure, even a meaning—a luxury denied to lives in process, to those who are still becoming (or disintegrating into) something else.

And yet the protagonist doesn't, ultimately, think much of Joseph ("never mind that Joseph and his forgiveness"), doesn't see as admirable either the memoir or the mythic resolution of Joseph's Jungian psycho-dynamic via the "anima" dream. If the dead Joseph is a projection of the author's own life, his other surrogate, the protagonist, is victimized by that projection. His preoccupation with it, a kind of self-defeating self-absorption, distracts him from the deteriorating relationship with his wife, and the novel ends in unresolved tension: Sheila has left him for an affair with her agent, but has apparently lost her nerve and returned home; the protagonist can't decide his own feelings, and retreats, "tired and sick at heart."

The last page of the novel is as bleak as anything Aldiss has ever written. There is no resolution, no epiphany, no transcendence—only the messy, meaningless desires and conflicts of an overly examined life. If shaping a life into myth has its rewards, they are absent aesthetic, achieved only by a kind of distancing that makes the object of art personally irrelevant to the artist. Or so it would seem in *Forgotten Life*.

I suppose Ms. Weill may have ignored that aspect of what she obviously sees as an autobiographical novel out of some sense of delicacy. The same considerations kept me from finishing my review.

[You may since have seen Part II of Ellen Weill's essay in issue #27. We apologize for not making it clear that the portion in #26 was the first of two. We hope you found her discussion of Clement as illuminating as the rest.—RKK]

Nancy A. Collins, New Orleans, Louisiana

Regarding Jack Womack's "Read This" suggestions, where in his commentary on a JFK conspiracy book he asks whether the Zapruder film has ever been used in music videos—of course it's been used! Mostly by alternative underground music groups who stand 0% chance of making it onto MTV, anyway. I can distinctly remember two. One was set to Hendrix's "Star Spangled Banner" and the frames had been hand-traced and colored to resemble an animator's rough pencil sketch. Various signs in the background have messages such as "Watch out!", "Duck!", "Sniper in Book Depository!" The other combines Zapruder footage, carefully edited samplings from Walter Cronkite's radio commentary, and a Dadast re-enactment of the events performed by members of the Church of the SubGenius in costume. (Oswald is portrayed as a guy in a clown suit wearing a hunter's cap and carrying a rifle.) The "music" video is called "And the Motorcade Sped On." Always glad to be of informational assistance.

Adventures in Bibliography

Continued from page 24

who's sure she owns the place.

And then there is the reference collection. Nearly every critical and reference book ever done on the field is there and accessible, putting most libraries in the world to shame—utopia for a researcher. (David only has about 75% of the material in his research collection.)

Lloyd's place is one of those marvelous constructions, like Charles Brown's in Oakland or Gerry de la Ree's in Saddle River, where knowledge of fantasy and sf grows, expands, flowers. Hey, remember Clifford D. Simak's way stations? Perhaps they were a metaphor for Lloyd's. And the hospitality was gracious and generous.

Thank you, Lloyd and Carol.

—Kathryn Cramer, David G. Hartwell & the editors

Adventures in Bibliography

Two weeks ago, David and Kathryn made a pilgrimage to wintry Elizabethtown, New York, to visit contributing editor Lloyd W. Currey and his wife Carol and to coax more bibliography out of Lloyd, fount of knowledge and indefatigable bookdealer. As part of our mission at *NYRSP*, we consider it essential to expand the bibliographical information generally available, both historical and current, on publications in the fields we cover.

To know the fantasy and sf field, one must know what exists to be considered. We have been running serially Greg Cox's entertaining annotated bibliographic checklist of vampire stories and will continue to do so. We are actively interested in running more bibliographic material and would be particularly interested in finding someone to do lists of work from the fannines by major authors, on major authors, or anything that gives access to the rich lode of work now preserved in the memories and in the personal collections of older fans and damn near entirely inaccessible to contemporary students of the field.

During the first year or so of *NYRSP's* publication, we ran at least one of Lloyd's bibliographies per issue, updating and expanding the coverage in his classic bibliography, *Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors: A Bibliography of First Printings of Their Fiction* (1979). Starting with issue three, we ran bibliographies of Orson Scott Card (no. 3), Greg Bear (no. 4), Greg Benford (no. 5), Robert Aickman (no. 6), Thomas Burnett Swann (no. 7), Evangeline Walton (no. 8), David Brin (no. 9), Elizabeth Lynn (no. 10), Joan Slonczewski (no. 10), George O. Smith (no. 11), Katherine MacLean (no. 12), Robert L. Forward (no. 12), Bruce Sterling (no. 13), Tom Reamy (no. 13.), William Gibson (no. 14), Kenneth Morris (no. 15), and Margaret St. Clair (no. 16). Back issues containing these bibliographies are still available from us for \$2.50 each.

We were forced to discontinue them at the beginning of 1990 when Lloyd and Carol began remodelling and restoring their Adirondack home and grounds. Simultaneously, Lloyd bought a new building for his bookselling business and began extensive renovations there, including the moving and reshelving of thousands of first editions. Not much leisure in there for Lloyd to devote spare hours and days to the careful, time-eating examinations and comparisons and research necessary for the completion of each author's bibliography. But now he has begun to complete the bibliographies of a new batch of authors and can assure us of a continuing supply for future issues—Dan Simmons and Robert R. McCammon are due shortly, then a dozen others.

It was neat fun to visit Lloyd's charming new book operation—surely the largest, cleanest, best-organized collection of fantasy and sf available for purchase in the world. Lloyd bought an old house, rearranged most of the walls, stripped all the lovely old woodwork down to the bare wood and restained, and then filled the place with built-in wood bookshelves. He also added a wing to the building complete with special flood-proof foundations and a motorized shelving system. Lloyd shares the premises with Natasha, a temperamental grey Persian cat

(continued on page 23)

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